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Byzantine Political Thought

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I. THE SEPARATION OF THE BYZANTINE EMPIRE FROM ROME

From the third century onwards the barbarians had been constantly attacking and crossing the line of the Rhone and the Rhine. For many years the western parts of the Roman Empire had been a battlefield and eventually they succumbed to the invaders. Through the Danube provinces passed the Goths, the Huns, the Lombards; Gaul, Spain, Northern Africa were in turn occupied by Visigoths, Sueves, Vandals, Franks, Burgundians, Alemanni; in the end Rome was captured by Germanic tribes.

War, the helplessness of the rulers, plague, misery, lawlessness and violence, all disrupted normal life. Rome became more interested in the Eastern provinces because of their economic importance for the Empire. The necessity for the reorganization of the state became imperative. Diocletian divided the Empire into four large areas under independent rulers in order to improve the defence of the state and to strengthen public authority. He himself took up residence at Nicomedia in order to supervise the Eastern provinces. The territorial division was followed by a reorganization of the central powers; old Republican offices gave way to a more efficient administration subject to the Emperor.

The army was also transformed, divided into mobile units (*comitatenses*), easily transferred from one theatre of war to another, and into units of peasant-soldiers (*limitanei*), settled on the frontiers for defence. The attempts of Diocletian to reform economic life were, however, unsuccessful; price-edicts did not stop a wave of inflation, the Emper-

or could not restore confidence in the currency, so that in Egypt the old coins from the time of Ptolemy were preferred to the imperial ones.

The abandonment of the great historical town and the transfer of the capital of the Empire 1500 kilometres to the East was neither an accident nor a whim of the emperor — it was determined by the political situation¹. The long distance from Rome to the Eastern provinces complicated both the transfer of armies and the supply of corn for the capital from Egypt and the Black Sea provinces. Here too, far from the Roman temples, it was easier for the Emperors to proclaim Christianity the state religion. In 392 pagan offerings were forbidden, the Emperor Gratian refusing to be *Pontifex Maximus*. The ideas proclaimed by the emperors of the divine origin of absolute power, ideas very foreign to the traditions of the Roman Republic, were more quickly understood and accepted by the Eastern people². Thus Rome ceased to be the capital of the world, *caput mundi*.

The Diocletian concept of a divided Empire with an Eastern capital was continued by Constantine and his successors. During the fourth century the Western and Eastern provinces of the Empire formed one whole for only 25 years.

On November 26th 326 at Byzantium, a place long remarkable for its strategic and economic position, Constantine established a new capital, which he was to call four years later Constantine's New Rome. The Emperor placed the heart of the Empire in the East, close to a barrier dividing both continents and seas. Byzantium was the centre of routes leading from the Danube Valley to the banks of the Euphrates, tracks joining the European continent with the Indian Ocean.

Within reach of the Byzantine fleet lay the Black Sea and the Basin of the Mediterranean and roads led from Byzantium in all directions, to the Balkan Peninsula, the Valley of the Danube, the shores of the Adriatic, the Black Sea shores, Asia Minor, the lands behind the Caucasus, Upper Mesopotamia and Northern Syria. The Empire now had a maritime capital; according to Procopius, „The sea surrounds the

¹ One cannot agree with F. Lot (*La fin du monde antique et le début du moyen âge*, Paris 1927, p. 43—44) who calls the transfer of the capital to Byzantium a „caprice of the despot” born of religious exaltation.

² R. Guérard (*Vie, grandeurs et misères de Byzance*, Paris 1954) goes even as far as to defend the thesis that the Gospels were the basis of the Byzantine state (p. 17 ff). The author expresses the view that the Eastern emperors considered themselves to be the vicars of Christ, which on the one hand implied a special ceremonial, and on the other hand a belief in the emperors that they were a bodily personification of the Spirit of Christ. According to the author the theatrical and unnatural behaviour of the Emperors was a result of that belief (p. 4).

town like a crown so that the remaining piece of land serves only to close the crown" (*De Aedificiis* I, 5, 10). But it was safe-guarded even by land, because already in the time of Constantine, the building of fortifications was begun, and after over a hundred years, during the reign of Anastasius (491—518), the town was surrounded by walls from sea to sea.

The intersection of land and sea routes made for the power of Byzantium in times of expansion but it was also a weakness. The same routes which enabled the transfer and manoeuvring of armies also led enemies easily to a rich city. Along the roads in all directions came armies, merchants, goods. They were followed by Hellenic and Eastern ideas. Here the great traditions of Rome met with Christian mysticism and formed a new culture. In contrast to the deserted Rome, Constantinople grew and expanded, vibrating with life. In the sixth century the population of a million, all calling themselves Romans, consisted of multilingual tribes. They were Armenians, Syrians, Egyptians, Jews, inhabitants of Thrace, Slavs, Germans and of course Greeks, who gave the city its essential tone. As in Rome corn had to be imported for the inhabitants, whose existence depended on regular supplies, coming mainly from Egypt. The yearly freight of corn from Egypt, called *embole*, came to 8 millions artabs, or about 11 million bushels, and it cost 80,000 solids a year³.

The division between East and West constantly deepened; it was determined by economic, social, political and ideological differences which paralyzed all attempts at creating a uniform, universal Empire. Justinian himself saw the failure of the attempt to restore the old Empire. His troops, after heavy casualties, occupied Italy in 536—546 and in 536 Rome herself. But his attempt, as well as some others initiated later, was quite fruitless. Although the disruption of the slave economy affected both East and West, so that the old political and social structure disappeared, it nevertheless took a different shape in either part of the Empire⁴.

³ The dates of the dispatch of corn were strictly observed; each year before the 10th of September the corn had to be brought to Alexandria, from where it was shipped to Byzantium. The cargo went to Byzantium from Alexandria two or three times a year.

⁴ „The most important reason for the continuity of Byzantium in comparison with the Western Empire”, writes З. В. Удальцова: *Византийский временник*, II (27) 1949, p. 342—343, „was its highly developed economics. At a time when in the West economic decay was increasing and a civil war was raging which led to the fall of the Western Empire, in Byzantium production and commerce developed apace. The existence of rich cities put in the hands of the emperors the material means to strengthen the central power and to increase the military might of the

In the West imperial power was weakened by the constant movement of troops, by wars and defeats. On the ruins of this power the Church was beginning to found its rule. The helpless and unarmed population sought protection from the landowners, and, by becoming thus dependent, loosened the grip of the state. Already at the beginning of the 5th century the landowners were undermining the power of the state, having at their disposal their own officials, police, postal services, and even armed forces (*bucellari*), which were kept on army pay (*bucella*). They also obtained the right to impose and collect taxes. The state now collected taxes indirectly through the landowners. The great mass of the „colons” had every day less contact with the official government administration. Their dependence on the landowners was preparing the ground for the social degrees of the feudal ladder.

In the East, however, the Byzantine emperors prevented this process. Laws were enforced imposing penalties both on those who abandoned „freedom” in order to enter into dependence on a feudal lord, and on the landowners who extended help and protection. In Justinian's Codex we read, „Nobody should promise his patronage to peasants or take them under his patronage in exchange for a fixed rent or other services. Whoever breaks this prohibition will be punished...” (*Cod. Iust. XI*, 54).

In *Novella XXX* Justinian writes to the governor of Cappadocia as follows:

„It appears to us that in your province there are terrible happenings and you will not achieve anything on your own. I blush with shame to hear about the incredible lawlessness of the magnates, who, with incredible arrogance, move about surrounded by armed troops composed of servants and local inhabitants, plundering without shame or conscience. We wonder how our subjects can tolerate such lawlessness. We hear of numerous complaints from ecclesiastics and women about the plundering of their estates.

„Even our own possessions have passed into private hands, the imperial studs have been wasted, and nobody has said a word because their lips were sealed with gold”.

Similarly, in *Novella XVII, De mandatis principum*, Justinian writes to the governor of a province: „The 'patronage' which is spreading widely in our provinces should be opposed by all means; do not allow

Empire, and thus made it possible to quell the revolution of the slaves and to preserve the Empire before the onslaught of the barbarians. The stability of the Empire was furthered by the fact that feudalism grew very slowly in Byzantium, because of the peculiarities of the serf-system in the East”.

anybody to subject the lives of people to their own power and to oppose thus the authority of the state".

The war against 'patronage' went on through the whole history of Byzantium. Emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitus (913—959) still says after his predecessor Romanus Lecapenus: „Very often it has come to my knowledge that the wealthy men of Thrace, disregarding laws proclaimed by emperors and derived from natural human rights, and disobeying our orders, continue to infiltrate into the countryside. They expel the poor from the land which belongs to them, by tyrannising them and by buying either gifts or wills. In consequence, having deliberated upon those cases... we establish a law that all those who, although forbidden by the orders of our predecessors from buying land from the poor, ...have dared to infiltrate into the villages or to seize the land of the poor, must immediately, without any delay or explanations, vacate land obtained in such a way. They will not be entitled to claim any damages..."⁵.

In the East the big estates, due to the action of the emperors, had constant restrictions imposed upon them. No independent, self-supporting economic organisms were formed; on the contrary, Byzantium, with its pulsating economic life, drew the big estates into the orbit of its own commercial interests⁶. The emperors were anxious to preserve communities of free peasants, which supplied good recruits as well as taxes⁷.

⁵ Konstantinos Porphyrogenetos col. III, nov. 6, *Ius Graeco-Romanum*, ed. J. and P. Zepos, I, Athens 1931, p. 215.

⁶ М. В. Левченко: Материалы для внутренней истории Восточно-Римской империи V—VI вв., Византийский сборник, Leningrad 1945, p. 76 ff. The author states that in the Eastern Empire, as in the West, there were big properties whose owners claimed the functions and rights of government. As in the West the free peasants were subordinated and oppressed by the large property owners. But in spite of many common features the ownership of big property in the East can be differentiated from that in the West. Large property in the East was not economically independent as in the West. In the East large property was not transformed into a self-sufficient economic unit, as the owners were interested only in luxury articles and had no contact with either the towns or the larger markets. In Byzantium large property was more intensively incorporated into the commerce of the Empire, likewise the big cities, with their hundreds of thousands of inhabitants which used agricultural products in large quantities.

⁷ The importance of the free peasants is pointed out by Е. Э. Липшиц: Византийское крестьянство и славянская колонизация, Византийский сборник, Moskva — Leningrad 1945, p. 142—143 „...In Byzantium, the free peasants were one of the main sources of income tax and also an inexhaustible source of military manpower, being thus the essential basis of a centralized Byzantine state".

From the middle of the VIIth century the free population in the country was growing and providing support for the imperial power⁸.

In the forties of the VIIth century the Empire suffered a heavy military defeat and lost two thirds of its territory to the Arabs in the South and to the Slavs in the East. It also lost its character as a world empire, preserving only the Eastern parts of it and ethnically and socially evolving several new characteristics. The mass settlement of Slavs and Armenians distinctly strengthened the class of small freeholders. The Slavs settled in the European provinces as well as in Asia Minor. The freeholder communities increased in number; the system of the 'colonate' fell into abeyance. The free peasants formed the basis of the army and were for many years to defend the frontiers. The independent peasants, owning their own land, were the support and strength of the imperial power. Only now, after centuries, with the appearance of new tribes in the empire, did the former abortive plan of the Gracchi to buttress the power of Rome with the support of the free peasants become a reality. Whereas in the West the free Frank peasant was unable to keep his independence, because the weakness of the imperial power forced him to seek the patronage of the local lords, the free Slavs in the Eastern Empire strengthened the imperial power, which was thus able to control the process of feudalization of the East.

Economic development was also different in the Eastern and Western towns, based either on local government of the Hellenic type or on the model of the Roman *municipium*. From the 3rd century onwards there are more and more instances of citizens declining official posts which they were unable to shoulder. Helpless in the face of increasing disorder, they abandoned their estates and fled. In the ruined and depopulated towns in the West commercial life and crafts came to a standstill, whereas in the East, Constantinople developed commercial relations with great impetus, penetrating as far as China, India, Ceylon. Men and money flowed into the city. The privileged citizens of Constantinople looked with contempt at those from the old Greek cities. „Now”, writes the Greek historian Eunapius in the 5th century, „the corn of all Asia,

⁸ „Soviet historians of Byzantium presume,” writes М. Б. Левченко: Византийский временник, II, 1949, p. 325) „that in the 7th century the majority of the Byzantine peasants became free; they won their freedom from their oppressors in a bitter struggle, largely owing to the military defeat of the Empire in the war against the Arabs and Slavs, and particularly by the invasion of the Slavs and the Slavonic colonization of the Empire. Hence, if slavery lost its predominant position in the Byzantine Empire, the credit must largely go to the Slavs. They did not destroy the Empire as the Germanic tribes and other barbarians did in the West, but, on the contrary, the Slavs contributed in a great measure to the change in the social system, and by their barbarism ‚rejuvenated’ Eastern Europe”.

Syria and Phoenicia is not enough to feed the hungry mob which Constantine has herded to Byzantium from the bereaved towns of the Empire"⁹. However, the jealousy of other towns could not stop the rapid development of the main market of the Empire, the world centre of exchange between East and West.

From the descriptions of the traveller Cosmas, a merchant and monk who lived in the reign of Justinian, we learn about the commercial routes to the Far East, about the value of the Byzantine currency and goods transported. The citizens of the new capital were convinced that their currency was of world importance, as we see in a boastful remark of Cosmas about the apparently high valuation of Byzantine coins by the ruler of Taprobane, i.e. Ceylon.

When a Byzantine of the name Sopater found himself in Ceylon together with some Persian merchants, the local ruler enquired about the power and influence of the kings of Persia and Byzantium. The Persians described their monarch as the most powerful master in the world, king of kings. Sopater, on the other hand, showing a Byzantine *nomisma* (coin) and a silver Persian coin, with emblems of their monarchs, apparently declared that coins are a proof of importance. Then, according to Cosmas' report, „the king examined the coins... compared them, and, being very impressed by the Byzantine ones, said that the Romans are powerful, marvellous and exceptionally wise. He also ordered Sopater to be treated with special respect. He was put on an elephant and taken round the town, accompanied by the music of caldrons”¹⁰.

The merchants undertook long journeys by land, through Samarkand to the frontiers of Persia, and then through Persia to the city of Nisibis on the Eastern frontier of the Empire, all in order to bring materials and spices for the court and the rich men of the Empire, who were always in need of luxuries. The maritime commercial routes converged on Ceylon and then led to the Persian Gulf or to the shores of Africa. The needs of the new capital, the volume of trade, the sumptuous life and love of luxury, all stimulated the merchants' activities and the enterprise of craftsmen even in the provincial towns of the East.

There was also a difference between the Eastern structure of power and its Roman models. There existed in Byzantium the traditional offices of consuls and praetors, there was even a senate formed from the landed aristocracy, but they were merely symbols, titles of honour, vestiges of the past which were of no consequence in the real organi-

⁹ Eunapios. Ed. Boissonade, Paris 1849, p. 462.

¹⁰ Kosmas XI. Ed. E. O. Winstedt, Cambridge 1909, p. 323.

zation of the state. Justinian, wishing to restore the universality of the Empire, declared:

„We are re-establishing all that existed in the past, although its value has been minimised... by respecting the name of Romans we will ensure that the past will in a greater measure come back to life in our state” (*Nov. XVII*).

The preservation of ancient titles aimed at restoring only the memory of a uniform state, because in fact, apart from the army and the emperor, a centralized bureaucracy held the reins of power. The Emperor's deputy, appointed especially for the provinces, was a high official called *praefectus pretorio per orientem*. The government lay in the hands of the *quaestor sacri palatii* who was in charge of justice; the *comes sacrarum largitionum*, who was in charge of the mint and taxes, the *comes rerum privatarum*, who looked after the Emperor's estates and income, and the *magister officiorum*, who had the highest power and supervised the postal services, the Emperor's enormous office, internal transport and foreign missions. The highest officials formed the council of state (*sacrum consistorium*), which occasionally also included the military chiefs (*magistri militum*). To the ruling élite belonged the Patriarch of Constantinople and the mayor of the city (*praefectus urbi*), who also held the office of chairman of the senate.

In the entourage of the emperor were many officials for his personal service (*cubicularii*), headed by a high ranking official (*praepositus sacri cubiculi*).

Originally the official language was Latin, but later, in the 6th century Greek came into use. From the beginning of the 7th century, after heavy defeats and the loss of two thirds of the Eastern provinces to the Arabs and Slavs, the eyes of the emperors were turned not to Rome but towards Athens. The idea of restoring the Roman Empire was abandoned; after an unsuccessful attempt to expand westwards the main interest became focussed on Greek culture, the treasures of the Greek past, the discovery of Greek drama; there was a revival of Aristotle and, more especially, of Plato. The Greek language triumphantly replaced Latin. These were the first signs of an approaching Renaissance in Byzantium.

The Greek language of Byzantium differed from the Hellenic models; pathos and emphasis obliterated the sharpness, simplicity and clarity of the words. It seems that an attempt was made to restore vitality to a language which had lost its quality and strength by the use of a great number of adjectives and unnecessary repetitions. However, it meant that Byzantine Greek should preserve for the world the greatness of antiquity when the splendour of Rome was waning.

During its long history (over a thousand years) the Eastern Empire did not enjoy good relations with its neighbours, for its shining luxury roused both jealousy and apprehension. Where diplomacy and money failed, Byzantine armies intervened, repelling the onslaughts of calculating Persians, fearless Slavs, fanatical Arabs, invidious Crusaders, to succumb in the end to the power of the Turks. Within the empire confusion was increased by the struggles of pretenders to the throne, palace revolutions and interminable, barren theological disputes.

In the 8th century the marks of the slave system gradually disappeared from Byzantium, and at the same time there started strong heretical and plebeian movements led by the Paulicians. The stormy surface of actual events tends to veil the deep social conflicts which cut through the history of Byzantium. Revolutionary demonstrations of the people, armed struggles against rich and hated rulers, and the tactics of the emperors to win over by concessions or to frighten by threats are proofs of class-conflicts. Not only the interests of the poor and the rich clashed but also those of various ruling cliques. The landed aristocracy quarrelled with the financial aristocracy. Big landlords, using their privileges, tried through their own bureaucracy to eliminate the state apparatus, which was on the other side supported by the moneyed merchant class, aiming at security for their own commercial enterprises.

Whereas the free peasants, who grew in number from the 7th century onwards, were the strength of the central power, they were the cause of the weakness of the landed aristocracy, because their presence checked the spread of slavery. The rulers of Byzantium exploited this lack of unity among the possessing classes by turning the financial aristocracy against the landed aristocracy. The more enterprising emperors sought the support of the populace, like the Emperor Phocas (602—610) who reached the throne with the help of the people¹¹ or the Emperor Andronicus Comnenus (1182—1185) when the empire was on the point of disintegration. A hostile historian, Theophylact Simocatta, then wrote about Phocas „...amid the shouts of the people, who demanded a complete reversal of existing conditions, a usurper was acclaimed as Caesar, and so ignominy was perpetrated, evil triumphed over good and the disasters of the Romans began... At the church of St. John the Baptist that villain was crowned, and then he drove into the capital in the imperial carriage, drawn by four white horses, took possession of

¹¹ L. Bréhier: *Vie et mort de Byzance*, Paris 1947, p. 47 ff., shows that Phocas, in his struggle with the Emperor Mauricius was supported by the lowest classes of the population and army and was opposed by the aristocracy, state officials, and the higher military commanders.

the palace, took gold from the treasury and scattered it in the streets, like rain from a golden cloud..."¹².

A contemporary historian, Acominatus, wrote otherwise about the Emperor Andronicus: „without infantry or cavalry and armed only with justice he went lightly to the capital which loved him...”. To him Acominatus also turns with delight „...we have known for long that you are gentle to the poor, terrible to the greedy, that you are a defender of the weak and an enemy of the violent, that you do not turn the scales of Themis either to the left or to the right and that your hands are clean from any corruption”¹³.

The thousand years' history of Byzantium, where power was held by men and women alike, was marked by splendour and glory, defeat and decline. Out of 107 rulers between 395 and 1453 only 34 died a natural death; the others fell as victims of conflicts, uprisings, wars. There were 65 palace revolutions. In the 7th century the Empire went through a difficult period, losing most of its territories to the Arabs, Slavs and Avars. The believers of Islam found themselves under the walls of Constantinople in 674—678; in the Balkans a new serious danger formed and consolidated, that is, a Bulgarian state. Inside the Empire began the disruption of the slave economy and sharp social conflicts, leading to revolutionary movements among the plebeians, directed by the Paulicians.

From the beginning of the 8th century for 100 years the rulers of the Syrian dynasty, started in 717 by Emperor Leo III, used the free peasants to try and restore the greatness of the Empire. They evolved an absolute state, successfully opposed the authority of the religious orders and regained most of the lost possessions. Under this dynasty took place the unification of the state, the reorganization of administration, and a struggle against the dominance, wealth and ignorance of the monasteries. The Syrian rulers resurrected in Byzantium Hellenic ideas, proclaimed laws making all citizens equal under law, guaranteed free court proceedings, and above all strengthened legally the position of the free peasants.

The powerful commercial situation of Byzantium, its accumulated wealth, the exertions of the military commanders together with the shrewd political tactics of the government, made possible a long period of glory. For nearly 200 years during the rule of the Macedonian dynasty (867—1056) and of the Comnenian dynasty (1081—1185) the Byzantine court successfully rivalled that of the Baghdad Khalifs. However, in the internal structure the courageous and progressive measures of the Syrian dynasty were gradually disregarded. The free peasants became

¹² Theophylakt Simocattes VIII, 10, 5 (p. 303 de Boor).

¹³ Michael Akominatus. Ed. Lampros, I, Athens 1879, p. 163, 145.

feudalized, reactionary clergy came to the fore, fiscal exploitation brought in dissatisfaction and revolt¹⁴.

From the end of the 12th century the centre of world economy shifted to Venice and Genoa and their merchants grasped the strings of Byzantium's economic life. Their incomes surpassed the sums paid into the treasury and the profits of Byzantine citizens. Economic difficulties caused inflation, the value of the nomisma decreased several times; currency was no more made of gold but of an alloy of silver and copper. The Italian Republics defeated Byzantium commercially and in 1204 were to destroy it at the hands of the Crusaders. For many tens of years Christian knights left ruin and poverty in the capital of the Empire. According to the testimony of the historian Gregoras Nicephorus, even in the 14th century there were still traces of the Crusaders' destruction. „Imperial palaces and the residences of the aristocracy”, says the historian, „lay in ruins, serving as public conveniences for passers-by, and the big and splendid houses surrounding the Church of Sophia, which were formerly the pride of ancient architecture, lay in ruins or were rased to the ground...”¹⁵.

In 1397 the Turks besieged Byzantium and finally, on May 29th 1453, when they occupied the capital, they brought the Eastern Empire to its end.

From this mass of social and economic contradictions developed political doctrines, deriving from the state concepts of both East and West, from the cross-section of religious beliefs in this borderland of Asia and Europe, from dogmatic controversies and elements of Greek philosophy. The mass of the people were opposed to the official doctrine, tainted by theocracy; misled by their own leaders, they were not always conscious of their role. Side by side with the imperial and popular ideas there spread scepticism and pessimism, either steeped in Greek philosophy, or expressed in a religious doctrine¹⁶.

¹⁴ The problem of agrarian reforms in Byzantium is treated in G. Ostrogorski's work: *Agrarian conditions in the Byzantine Empire in the Middle Ages. The Cambridge Economic History of Europe*, t. I, Cambridge 1942, p. 194—223, 579—583. The author stresses the role of tax-pressure in the transformation of the structure of the big landed properties through a gradual extinction of small peasant holdings.

¹⁵ *Historia Bizantina* XI, 2. Bonnae 1829.

¹⁶ In the literature on Byzantium there prevails an opinion that Byzantium had no interesting or worthwhile political doctrines. This attitude was lately adopted by Sir Ernest Barker, who brought together several texts relating to social and political questions. The author published his work under the title: *Social and political thought in Byzantium from Justinian I to the last Palaeologus (Passages from Byzantine writers and documents)* Oxford, 1957. In the introduction he stresses the absence of originality in Byzantine political thought. According to Barker (p. 2—10) Byzantium could not produce a more original political doctrine

II. THE OFFICIAL DOCTRINE

During the reign of Justinian (527—565), who reigned for nearly 40 years, the official doctrine of the Byzantine Empire received its best form. It was composed of three elements: the Christian religion, ideas from Roman law, and belief in the divine origin of power. Already under his predecessors Christian doctrine had enjoyed the position of the state religion, requesting from the faithful obedience and humility towards the ruler. The Stoic concept of law, in its Roman interpretation, attributed to the generally accepted norms of the empire the power of bringing about natural order in the world. And the Eastern theocratic conception of the divine power of the ruler, influenced the formation of the official Byzantine doctrine¹⁷.

All possible external signs were used, both in private and in public life, to stress the divine origin of power. The Emperors themselves were convinced that their power derived from God. Justinian believed that he himself was chosen by God and looked after by angels with all care in all his undertakings¹⁸.

Emperor Basil I (867—886), addressing his son Leo, says: „You received the power from God ... you will receive the crown from God through my hands”¹⁹. Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus (913—959), in his treatise about the art of government (*de administrando imperio*), says to his son: „God puts emperors on the throne and gives them power over all ... Your throne, like the sun, will stand in front of Him, and His eyes will be fixed on you, and nothing will be terrifying to you, because God has chosen you and separated you from your mother and transferred His power to you, recognizing you as the best of all”.

because the strong traditions of Greek philosophy put a brake on any more original thought. In addition, says Barker, the absence of political struggles and controversies between the parties, as well as between the Church and state, restrained any development in political thinking. The present writer takes the opposite view. The value of political doctrines does not depend on the degree of their originality but on the social function they fulfilled or fulfil. The strength and importance of a given political idea is decided first of all by the degree in which it expresses class interests and by its effect on social relations and political and legal institutions. From that standpoint the history of political thought in Byzantium is here treated.

¹⁷ F. Dölger: *Byzanz*, Berne 1952. In the chapter „Die politische Gedankenwelt”, p. 93, Dölger states that Constantine the Great had already tried to justify the divinity of the Byzantine ruler and his right to rule the world and the Church in the name of Christ.

¹⁸ C. Diehl: *Justinien et la civilisation byzantine au VIe siècle*, Paris 1901, p. 27 ff. The author draws attention to the theocratic elements in the official doctrine of Justinian.

¹⁹ Basilleios, Migne, P. G. 107, XXV, XXXII.

During the coronation the Patriarch crowning the emperor was meant to represent the will of the state, and, at the same time, when anointing he underlined the divinity of imperial power. The emperors used Greek letters to describe their dignity, with the additional word *θεῖος*, which corresponded to the Latin *augustus*.

Whereas the highest dignitaries of the Church had the right to use the titles *θεῖος* or *ἄγιος*, to stress their sanctity, for the emperor only was reserved the title *θεῖος*, divine. In the presence of the emperor they fell down with outstretched arms and kissed his feet. The historian of Justinian's time, Procopius, says that the eastern way of paying homage, from Justinian's reign onwards, bound also the senators, who had previously greeted the emperor only by kissing his right breast. All that surrounded the emperor at his court was divine, saintly, and almost an object of cult. All was in the charge of Cubicularii, under the leadership of the *praepositus sacri cubiculi*²⁰. The form of theocratical concepts was determined by the belief of the emperors that they were called by God to regulate matters of faith and to decide the choice of the leaders of the Church. They took part in dogmatic controversies, issued directives and religious decisions, convened councils, proclaimed the validity of the rulings of the courts.

In the West, which was evading imperial control, the popes and the bishops successfully strove for independence. Conflicts took place later between the secular and the religious power. In the East the doctrine of a state Church was established; in the West an independent Church defended a dual concept of two powers, religious and secular, of which

²⁰ We read in a minute account of court etiquette, „De ceremoniis aulae byzantinae”, that when all are in their places, "...the ostiarius with a golden rod... brings in the foreign envoy... The envoy falls on his face in front of the emperor and at the same moment the music of flutes is heard. The envoy gets up and goes nearer, remaining, however, at a certain distance from the throne. As the envoy approaches the throne there enter carefully chosen members of his suite, and after submission to the emperor these halt. When the logothetes puts the usual questions to the envoy, lions begin to roar and the golden birds on the throne and on the golden trees begin to sing melodiously. The wild animals sitting on the steps of the throne lift themselves up and stand on their hind legs. While this is happening the proto-notary *ἰοῦ δρομέων* of the court brings in the presents of the envoy who offers them to the emperor on behalf of his master. Soon after there resounds the sound of drums, the lions stop roaring, the birds cease singing and the wild animals go back to their lairs. After giving the presents the envoy, at the sign of the logothetes, pays his respects to the ruler and backs away. When he turns to the door... he is accompanied by the music of flutes, the roar of lions, the singing of birds and the wild animals again rise on their legs. The moment the envoy disappears the drums are heard, the birds become silent and the animals return to their lairs".

the secular was dependent on the religious. In the East the influence and direction of the Church by the emperors were particularly strong; here religion was an important element in ideas and organization, binding together the multilingual empire of the East²¹. „Trust in God”, says Justinian, „is the only support guaranteeing the existence of the Empire; in it lies the salvation of our soul, and therefore it is necessary that all our jurisdiction derive from this principle, which ought to be the beginning, the middle and the end” (*Nov. 109 praef.*). Justinian considered himself to be the highest theologian, called by God to decide in matters of faith. In 533, for instance, he issued to the citizens of all towns a proclamation on questions of dogma, condemning heretics; and in 553 he arranged for a council at Constantinople, to stress the unity of Church and state. He then officially condemned any philosophy, which might contaminate the Christian religion. The Byzantine emperors, following the example of the Persians, made the Eastern Church into a state Church, and the Western Church and Papacy they treated as political partners, useful in an attempt to create a universal empire²².

They raised Christianity to the rank of the official religion, reserving for themselves the last word in all matters of the Eastern Church. The 10th century book of ceremony for the election of the Patriarch of Constantinople, who in fact ruled the Eastern Church, explicitly underlines the decisive role of the emperor in the election. At the command of the Emperor the metropolitans gathered in the Church of St. Sophia and presented to him three candidates. If the Emperor rejected all three and nominated his own candidate, the gathering of the metropolitans simply acknowledged that the candidate was worthy to be patriarch. In the presence of the senate and the clergy present, the emperor specifically declared to the newly chosen patriarch that „by the will of God and Emperor” he received that honour²³. In turn, the can-

²¹ „Frightened by the risings of the slaves and colons in the West of Europe, the ruling circles of the Eastern Roman Empire tried to form a permanent state unified by one religion. They expected that the Church would assure the moral and political unity of the exploited and of the exploiting. Many efforts were undertaken to make the Church completely dependent on the state and the population of the Empire completely dependent on the state Church” (M. B. Левченко: Византийский временник II, 1949, p. 13).

²² The rulers of the Sassanide dynasty reigned in Persia from 226 A. D. to the middle of the 7th century, that is to say from the Arab conquest. During their rule Zoroastrianism became the state religion and the magi — priests collaborated closely with the state.

²³ *De ceremoniis aulae byzantinae*, II, 14. Bonn, p. 564 ff.

didate of the Emperor had an influence on the policy and choice of personnel of the Church, and this served to strengthen the unity of the Eastern state.

Justinian quite officially favoured the Church, often having recourse to injustice, which was in his mind justified by religion. „In the Christian religion”, says Procopius about Justinian, „he considered himself unyielding, which meant defeat and misery for his subjects. He left the clergy complete freedom to impose methods of force on the people. If they spoiled the estates of their neighbours, without exception he gave them his approval and support, assuming that in this way he was showing his piety. He considered it a service to God if he praised ecclesiastical decisions enabling the clergy, under the pretext of the interests of the Church, to occupy by force estates not in their rightful possession, later obtaining confirmation of such lawlessness in court. The Emperor saw the ideal of justice in the victory of the clergy over their opponents. He himself took possession of estates belonging either to living or deceased landlords and then offered them to the churches and boasted about it, covering his sinful deeds by such pious behaviour, so that the appropriated estates would never return to those who suffered such violence” (*Historia arcana*, XIII, 4—6). The openly supported Church did not remain indebted to the Emperor, but offered him support in the administration of the state.

At the head of the dioceses were bishops, formally elected by the faithful, but in fact by the clergy of the diocese, with the approval of the metropolitan and of the patriarch. The bishops were subject to the metropolitans, whose jurisdiction covered the territory of an administrative province; and the metropolis in turn were parts of five patriarchates — Rome, Constantinople, Antioch, Jerusalem, Alexandria²⁴. In the Byzantine state the bishops exercised social and state functions, proclaimed imperial laws, kept hospitals (*νοσοκομεῖα*), orphanages (*θρησκευτροφεῖα*), old people's homes (*γεροντοκομεῖα*), hostels (*πτωχοτροφεῖα*). Eastern Christianity was the official doctrine of the Byzantine Empire and ecclesiastical institutions were to facilitate rule over the people by

²⁴ As equals to the foremost landowners, the Episcopate took part in the election of the municipal officials, controlled the municipal accounts, supervised through special commissions the upkeep of the public baths, store-rooms, water bridges, weights and measures (*Cod. Iust.* 1, 4, 46). The Bishop defended the interests of the city and in his capacity as a city representative he could submit petitions direct to the emperor. The practice of mediation gradually gave the bishops the right of supervision over the civil provincial officials... In addition to the civil court there also functioned an ecclesiastical court. The Bishop himself was a judge and the formalities of his court were reduced to the minimum” (М. В. Левченко: *Византийский временник*, II, 1949, p. 14).

discreetly smoothing over social and tribal differences among the faithful.

Whereas the organization of the Eastern Church was of help to the emperors in the government of the state, the essence of the Christian doctrine, differently interpreted by the faithful, was a source of constant controversies. Confused and full of understatements, the Christian religion provided many opportunities for discussions and dogmatic quarrels. The subjects of the controversies changed, as well as the arguments and sympathies of the rulers; but there remained discord between the Western and Eastern parts of the Empire, reflected in never-ending religious conflicts. So long as the Byzantine emperors were trying to restore a universal empire from Spain to the Euphrates, they made every effort to resolve dogmatic controversies. Their attempts, however, to change the course of history proved futile; in practice the economic and political situation sundered the attempted unity.

The differences tearing the Empire apart were accompanied by strong religious divergences, alienating the faithful in the East and West from each other²⁵. The conflict between the Western Orthodox and the Eastern Monophysites was long and unyielding. The orthodox followers of Rome defended the dualistic concept of the divine and human nature of Christ, the Monophysites advanced the doctrine that Christ was only divine. The conflicts and wars between them went on for centuries, starting with the declaration of Origen, who taught that God is pure spirit, timeless, not perceived by the senses, first cause of creation, and from him came Christ, mediating between God and the world. The teaching of Origen started a speculative discussion in the Church, to ascertain the relation of the divine to the human nature in Christ. The Emperor Constantine, in an unsuccessful attempt to end the quarrel, proclaimed „the identity of the nature of Father and Son”²⁶. In Syria, in the first half of the 5th century, Nestorius came out against the official Church. Starting from Aristotle’s philosophy, Nestorius and his followers distinguished the divine from the human nature in Christ, and consequently denied sanctity to the Mother of God. The condemnation of the Nestorians at the Council of Ephesus in 431 did not close the controversies in the Church.

²⁵ W. Schubart: *Justinian und Theodora*, München 1943, gives a very detailed and well-documented picture of the reign of the Emperor, but his view that the division between West and East derived from spiritual differences (p. 260 ff.) is a completely idealistic concept, because in fact economic, social and political differences conditioned the ideological disagreements.

²⁶ Concilium Niceanum I 325. Denzinger, No 54, ed. 18—20.

As a result of unending barren discussions a temporary agreement was reached that Christ is God and Man, but at the same time theological speculation found a new subject: whether the divine and human nature in Christ preserved their identity or whether, as the Monophysites said, the divine and human elements merged into one. The Council of Chalcedon in 451 accepted the dualistic thesis of Rome about the different natures of Christ, „true God and true man ... with an unchanged nature both divine and human...”²⁷. The Monophysites did not accept the decisions of the Council, and with the support of the emperors Zenon (474—491) and, later, Anastasius I (491—518), opposed Rome. The continuing dogmatic controversies did not prevent Christianity from being the official doctrine in the empire. On the contrary, the discords in the Church offered the emperors an excellent opportunity to regulate their relations with the Papacy by adopting a varying policy towards both sides. When, for instance, Justinian wanted to create unity in the Empire he officially supported the orthodox view in order to preserve good relations with Rome. At the same time he had in reserve the support of the Monophysites, backed by his wife Theodora.

Behind the speculative and dogmatic discussions about the nature of Christ there were different social interests and conflicting tendencies in East and West. In the belief of the Monophysites the dualistic concept of the orthodox faith was only a ruse on the part of the official Church to sanction the possession of worldly riches and a love of earthly life. Hence the call to asceticism proclaimed by the Monophysites was an attack on social inequalities, the possession of estates and the wealth of the Church²⁸. In addition the Monophysites represented the separatist tendencies of the Eastern peoples, who opposed the superiority of both Rome and Byzantium.

The epilogue of these ecclesiastical controversies was the Eastern Schism. On July 16th 1054 in the capital of the Byzantine emperors the papal legates anathematized the Eastern Patriarch Michael Cerularius. In return the dignitaries of the Eastern Church anathematized the papal legates, calling them „wild boars”, and this disturbed the peace of the „holy city”²⁹.

²⁷ Concilium Chalcedonense 451. Denzinger, No 148, ed. 18—20.

²⁸ М. В. Левченко: (История Византии, Москва — Ленинград 1940, p. 38) refers to the social aspect of the doctrine of the Monophysites.

²⁹ А. П. Лебедева (История разделения церквей в IX, X и XI веках, Petersburg 1905, p. 347) gives a translation of the Greek text of the excommunication, the MS of which was in one of the episcopal libraries in Moscow. It is not known where it is now.

The predecessors of Justinian had recognised the Christian religion as an official one, realizing the usefulness of Christian humility and of ecclesiastical organisation for the state; but Justinian also wanted to bind the empire together by a unified system of law. In this way the multiracial population was to be unified by religion and law. Almost from the beginning of his reign Justinian started the work of codification; a unified system had to be evolved from multifarious legal norms. Until then had been in force the precepts of the XII tables, popular declarations, motions of the Senate, pretorian edicts; the last were codified by the lawyer *Salvius Julianus* at the request of the emperor Adrian. The collection of these multifarious rules, full of repetitions and contradictions, also included imperial constitutions and the cases of famous lawyers. By order of Justinian a codifying bureau was formed, directed by the minister of justice (*quaestor sacri palatii*), *Tribonian*, a man of wide learning and legal experience. He began codification on December 15th 530, with the help of his officials and also of professors from *Berytos* and the more prominent members of the Supreme Court³⁰.

In a special declaration, named after its first words *Deo auctore*, there was contained the directive to prepare a codex, *πανοέκτατον* in Greek, *Digesta* in Latin. In it we find the maxim of the Stoics that Roman law realizes the natural order permeating divine and human matters.There is nothing more important for things in the world than the fact that they are subject to law; both human and divine matters are regulated by the orderly power of law, removing injustice. The origins of our law are very distant, going back to Romulus, to the founding of Rome. Hence their ever increasing number and obscurity, so that they have ceased to be available. Our most important task is the correction and ordering of all laws in a clear way"³¹.

When after 3 years there appeared the *Digesta*, Professor *Dorotheos* and Professor *Theophilus* were given the task of preparing a textbook, *Institutiones*, for student lawyers. At the same time, the Emperor, in a special letter, expressed his views about the role and importance of the idea of law for the Empire.Imperial Majesty should rest not

³⁰ C. Diehl (*op. cit.* p. 259 ff.) says that to do Justinian's codification they had to look through 2,000 books containing about 3 million lines. From that material they built, as Justinian put it, "the most sacred temple of Roman justice" (*Corpus Iuris Civilis*, I, ed. Krueger-Mommsen, p. XIII), which had 150,000 lines. Thus, to quote the Emperor, they closed "as if in a fortress the whole of the ancient law (*vetus ius*) which had not been codified for 1,400 years" (*Corpus Iuris Civilis*, I, p. XIII, XXV).

³¹ *Corpus Iuris Civilis*, I, p. XIII.

only on arms, but should also be equipped with law in order to be a leading force in war or peace. The Roman Emperor is not only victorious over enemies in the field, but is also the highest guarantor of law, destroying those who break it; therefore he is not only the most responsible guardian of law but also the most complete victor over the defeated enemy... for that reason, do learn law with all your strength and be so educated that you might, at the end of your studies, rule the country from your official positions”³².

Justinian several times repeated the principle that a legal codex cannot be a rigid whole; he understood the necessity of adjusting law to the changing circumstances of life, considering himself as the only person entitled to decide about any changes. „Human problems”, he says in *Novella* 49, „change and never stay the same, they are always in motion, never stable”. „Nature”, he says in *Novella* 85, „brings changes in all directions... and as long as it is like that, we will be forced to declare new legal norms”.

After codification, the uncodified norms lost their legal validity. The work of Justinian became law on December 30th, 533. It was forbidden to publish any commentaries; to avoid confusion it was forbidden to use any abbreviations when copying the *Digests*, in order to exclude any possible ambiguities and the necessity of interpretation. The Emperor gave permission to teach law to the professors of Rome, Constantinople and Beirut only, because in these towns his ideas found full appreciation; he forbade any teaching in Alexandria or Athens, where he met with criticism. He claimed that the professors tended to change the laws by their critical lectures — „*non leges docent sed in leges committunt*”³³. He did not wish, under any circumstances, to create a situation where it would be possible to break the law or avoid it. „If an order, even were it given by the divine power of the emperor, directed the judge to conduct the proceedings one way or another, the judge should nevertheless obey only the law. According to our wish”, says Justinian (*Novella* 82, 13) „only what is expressed in the law should be legally binding”.

Justinian demanded absolute obedience to a unified and universal law, hoping thereby to avoid any possible disorder as a result to exceptional judgments passed outside the law. In *Novella* 94 and 92 the Emperor quotes the wisdom of antiquity in order to prove that judges are not to solve problems or unique situations but only occurrences of a universal character.

³² *Corpus Iuris Civilis*, I, p. 2.

³³ *Corpus Iuris Civilis*, I, p. XVI.

The codex of Justinian was supposed to give to the state a feeling of stability and security. Justinian realized that the durability of a multilingual Empire could not be sufficiently preserved by administration or by a multilingual army, nor would the traditions and splendour of Rome constitute a sufficient bond. What was necessary was an officially recognised idea which would bind the population together, giving citizens a feeling of security and the rulers a guarantee of stability.

Such an idea was provided by the religious and legal doctrine of Justinian, grounded on Church and Roman law. By going back to the history of pagan Rome the emperor wanted to buttress the authority of his Christian state and law. „In the life of our state”, says Justinian, „we must bring about a return to antiquity in order to maintain the glory and respect due to Roman names” (*Novella 24*). But simultaneously he demanded a rigid observance of the principles of the new religion in its fight against the pagan past.

The political ideas of Justinian, in their form of a compact doctrine, can be found in a political treatise of the 6th century. The extant fragments of this treatise, whose authorship is ascribed to Peter the Patrician, illustrate the views of the aristocracy, who tried to combine the legal concepts of Justinian's state with their own interests³⁴. Following the idea of the Platonic *utopia*, the treatise expresses the view that only the aristocracy is called upon to govern because political wisdom is an attribute of that class, and the aristocracy can assure legal order and prosperity for the whole of society.

There are four political principles in the treatise representing the programme of the aristocratic circles of the time of Justinian. The first is a recognition of the divinity of the emperor, in whose hands lies the general management of the state. Secondly, the institution of an aristocratic senate is regarded as the pillar of the state. Thirdly, it is postulated that the highest apparatus of power should belong to the aristocracy, who ought to be in charge of state affairs. Fourthly, the people should be completely separated from the affairs of state, because, being subject to changeable moods, they cannot rule, but can only be ruled and educated by aristocratic leaders. The political doctrine of the treatise expressed the desire and intention of one class, while on the contrary, political practice in Byzantium had to reckon with the people, who often intervened efficiently in the most important affairs of state.

³⁴ V. Valdenberg: *Les idées politiques dans les fragments attribués à Pierre le Patrice*, „Byzantion”, II, 1925, p. 55—76.

The religio-legal doctrine based on Justinian's principles was accepted two hundred years later by the Syrian dynasty, especially by Emperor Leo III (717—741), who adapted it to changed circumstances. Leo was a Syrian, speaking Greek and Arabic fluently. He used the doctrine, not for the restoration of a universal Roman empire, as did Justinian, but to consolidate the Graeco-Byzantine empire, leaving out the distant provinces of West and East. He realized that the defence and strength of the Eastern Empire depended both on a good army and on the strong internal unity of the state. Following the example of his predecessors, he gave the military commanders complete power in the provinces. The government of many provinces had already passed into the hands of the commanders of army corps. Administrative units were now also known as 'corps' θέμα. Leo III was concerned for the unity of the state; thus he increased the number of military districts to 35, so that provincial commanders might not constitute too strong a power within the empire. The commanders of army corps were in turn subject to central military headquarters (*στρατάρχαι*). Only the judges (*χριταί*) and tax collectors (*ἐπόπται*) in the provinces were subordinated to the central offices. By issuing in 726 an extract from the existing laws (*'Εκλογή*) the emperor tried to impose on the citizens a uniform legal system.

The rulers of the Syrian dynasty took from Justinian the idea of basing the state on a uniform codification but they changed the essential sense of the legal norms. The statutes of Leo III (*'Εκλογή*) express progressive ideas in comparison with the laws of Justinian. They proclaim the principle of the equality of all Christian citizens under law, forbid „contempt for the lowest classes and lawless toleration of the crimes of the powerful”. The statutes about slavery disappeared, the enforced obligations of the peasants were reduced, as well as the sphere of paternal rights; husband and wife became equal in law, Church estates were taxed, and free and professional judicature was guaranteed and made subject to new laws. As a result of his concern for the security of the state, in the statutes of Leo III high treason did not only constitute, as in Justinian's code, an offence against the majesty of the Emperor, but an attempt against the entire state. „If anyone intends, plans or organizes an attempt against the emperor or against the Christian state, he deserves to be killed as one who wants to destroy everything”³⁵.

The policy, introduced in the 7th century, of the settlement on imperial territories of free peasants, who were to cultivate the land and defend the state, gradually replaced the system of the 'colonate'. Now a new agrarian law (*νόμος γεωργικός*), a collection of established shep-

³⁵ *Ekloge*, XVII, 3. *Jus Graeco-Romanum*. Ed. J. and P. Zepos, II Athenus 1931, p. 53.

herd laws, officially sanctioned their freedom and economic liberty. The emperor also issued a maritime statute (*νόμος ναυτικός*) to revive maritime trade, and a military statute (*νόμος στρατιωτικός*) in order to restore discipline and obedience in the army. Leo III and his successors wanted to rule by law and through a centralized apparatus of government and religious doctrine³⁶. At the head of the government was the chief of the treasury (*σακελλάριος*) assisted by four high officials (*λογοθέτες*); in charge of internal transport and diplomacy was the general tax collector (*τοῦ δρόμου*); the general army quartermaster (*τοῦ γενικοῦ*), the administrator of imperial estates (*τοῦ στρατιωτικοῦ*); judicature was administered by the quaestor (*τῶν ἀγελῶν*). Like Justinian, the emperor considered himself, "I am emperor and priest". Exploiting the tendencies of iconoclasm, he opposed the reactionary monks and religious orders, who kept the people in ignorance and superstition and were themselves the most determined followers of the cult of holy pictures and relics. The emperor liquidated the monasteries, removed backwardness and ignorance. He undertook a cultural revolution to shake off the influence of uneducated monks and repaired the finances of the state by confiscating the estates of monasteries and churches. However the activities of Leo III and of his successors, already full of ideas of a Renaissance, penetrated religious fanaticism only with difficulty.

The rulers of the Macedonian dynasty gradually liquidated the progressive legislation of their predecessors. Justinian's concept of binding the state together by means of religion was revived for the benefit of a developing feudalism. Basil I (867—886), in his introduction to the collection of laws, (*'Επαναγωγή*), writes about the legislation of the iconoclasts that they were „unreasonable norms, contrary to divine law and breaking the useful codification of Justinian". About 888 Leo VI issued a collection of laws entitled *Basilica*; this is a restitution of Justinian's codex for use in Church organization. In the introduction to the *Basilica* we read: "As society, like the human body, is composed of parts and members, its most important parts are the emperor and the patriarch. Therefore the peace and happiness of the subjects depend on the entire material and moral harmony between two powers — the empire and the archpriesthood... The emperor is the legal supremacy and the common good of all subjects. His duty is to do good. He ought especially to carry

³⁶ An extensive discussion of the legislation of the Syrian dynasty is to be found in B. Г. Василевский: Труды IV, часть 3. Законообразование иконоборцев, Leningrad 1930. However, L. Bréhier: op. cit., p. 77 denies to Leo III any original legislative activity.

out the decisions of oecumenical councils, the precepts of *Holy Scripture* and the laws of the Empire" ³⁷.

The views of the feudal gentry are found in a heroic epic about Digenis Acritas. This national song describes the life of a provincial feudal lord, who spends his time in endless fights, hunts, love-affairs and banquets. Among the sayings of the hero of the Byzantine epic we find the provincial gentry's opinion of the emperor. "They think", says Digenis, „that it is the duty of the ruler who desires fame, to love his subjects, take care of those in misery, defend the unjustly injured, not to listen to hypocrites, not to meddle illegally with other people's property, but to fight heretics and defend the true faith" ³⁸. In the epic can be discerned the pride of the provincial magnates, who, although recognizing the primacy of the emperor and of the Church, at the same time have contempt for the courtiers, believing that force makes law and that the sword is the ruler.

The provincial Byzantine gentry, whose ideals incorporated those of Digenis, were soon to find a common interest in the European feudal lords, who came to the Empire during the crusades.

In the middle of the XIth century there appeared a political treatise containing official theocratic doctrine. Its author was a higher military official, Katakalon Kekaumenos. In his remarks about the divine nature of the monarch the author tries to connect the unlimited power of a divinely authorised ruler with the precepts of religious ethics, which, according to him, should be the limits of executive power. His main thought expresses the belief that a ruler reigning morally and justly is an example and a benediction to his subjects. Giving the ruler practical advice, Kekaumenos sees an efficient and wise reign as dependent on shrewd advisers, a fighting army, an efficient staff of honest officials, equal treatment of all citizens, and a uniform and just levy of taxes. Kekaumenos must have been shocked by the influence of foreigners at the Byzantine court because he often repeats the axiom "restrict them in their privileges". Kekaumenos was a man of action rather than of abstract thought, and his treatise is an attempt to translate a theoretical doctrine into the language of practical needs ³⁹.

³⁷ *Epanagoga* 2, 1 and 38. *Jus Graeco-Romanum* op. cit., p. 240—242.

³⁸ *Basilios Digenis Akritas*. 6, 1526—1529. Ed. K. Sathas et E. Legrand, *Coll. de mon. N. S. Paris* 1875.

³⁹ *Cecaumeni strategicon et incerti scriptoris de officiis regiis libellus* was first published in 1881 by В. Г. Василевский: Советы и рассказы византийского боярина XI в. Журнал М.Н.П. 1881 № 6, p. 242—299, № 7, p. 102—171, № 8, p. 316—357. It is again discussed by M. W. Valdenberg: История византийской политической литературы в связи с историей философии и государственного устрой-

3. THE PLEBEIAN MOVEMENT AND ITS IDEOLOGY

The populace of the Byzantine towns, and of the capital in particular, participated in the elections of the Emperor, and both the high officials and the ruler standing for election had to reckon with their opinion. The support of the populace was an important factor in the disputes between groups of the ruling class. The favour of the town populace was sought after by both the moneyed aristocracy as well as by the court. Its prestige grew daily, because everywhere people were flocking to the big towns, and particularly to the capital. Justinian reflects with fear: „The provinces are continually deprived of population and our big cities are overcrowded by an influx of people from various parts of the country” (*Nov. 80 praef.*).

In order to stop the flow of people to the capital, various measures were taken, forbidding entry or limiting the length of stay in the capital. This only improved matters provisionally, and could not change the general tendency.

The population of the town was organized, according to the urban districts, into „demes”, which until the 7th century did not influence politics directly because the then known organization consisted of two parties in the circus, factions embracing in their organization the population of the demes. From the middle of the 7th century the activities of the circus party considerably decreased and this directly stimulated the development of the demes. The latter had no separate and compact doctrine; the enforced religious beliefs and the existing legal order excluded the possibility of another school of thought whose ideas would clash with the interests of the possessing classes. When the population of the towns was exploited in internal conflicts, the property-owning classes tried through their voiced opinion to create the impression that their own interests were the same as those of the people⁴⁰. However, the people were conscious of their injury, and, although they had no leaders,

ства. The manuscript of Waldenberg's work is in Leningrad in the Archives of the Academy of Sciences USSR Fond. 346, op. 1, No. 1. The description of the treatise is in the 4th chapter.

⁴⁰ А. П. Дьяконов: Византийские димы и факции в V—VII вв. Византийский сборник, Moskva — Leningrad 1945, p. 171 refers to the position of the demes in the politics of Byzantium as „the constitutional force”, which, in his view, gave the exploited masses a basis on which to face the ruling classes. On the other hand, says Diakonow, the comparative weakness of the ruling class made them seek the support of the demes organizing them into factions, of course with great benefit to themselves. The author points out that the political structure of Byzantium was a peculiar combination of three constitutional elements: the monarchy, the aristocracy of which the senate was composed, and the meetings of the demes, plus the influence of the army.

no programme, no compact doctrine, they continued to accuse the emperor and the officials in the face of the army and armed bureaucracy, and by revolutionary deeds they confirmed the legitimacy of their demands. Gatherings in the circus served for many occasions; in every bigger town in the empire the circus was the place where the populace gathered for the parades of the professional sportsmen, and it also acted as a tribune from which judgment was passed on the current government⁴¹. Here people assembled for the election of the emperor, here he showed himself to the people; here the victorious generals, returning from wartime expeditions, were admired and acclaimed; here the populace had a chance to show their dissatisfaction, and here, by the staging of sumptuous spectacles, attempts were made to win the support of the people.

The people of Constantinople always assisted formally at the election of emperors, but in fact the choice was made by higher military commanders and the army.

The election took place on the military parade ground, where assembled the commanders, higher officials and the army. The people in the hippodrome showed their approval or disapproval by shouting when the names of the candidates were called out. We know that the commander of the military camp (*campiductor*) hung an imperial chain on the neck of the newly elected ruler. The people then raised the shout, "He is worthy". When the emperor appeared to the crowd they shouted the formula, "Divine emperor, you are victorious, you are pious, you are noble. God has sent you, may God protect you. If you worship Christ, victory will always be yours. He will be emperor for many years". According to the ceremonial, the emperor thanked only God and the army for his election⁴².

⁴¹ In Upper Egypt, in the town of Oxyrhynchos, during the circus spectacles the followers of one party cheered the horses called *plebeians*, while their opponents put their bets on the horses called *patricians*. Quoted after W. Schubart: *op. cit.*, p. 85.

⁴² *De ceremoniis aulae byzantinae*, I, 91. — J. B. Bury rightly points out the influence of the army during the election and revocation of the emperors. (*The Constitution of the Later Roman Empire*, Cambridge 1910, p. 8 ff.) „It was a principle... in the earlier period of the Empire, that the people who elected the emperor could also overthrow him... There was not any formal procedure for deposition but the population of the capital, when too much afflicted by the rule of the emperor, put forward a new one... and if he found sufficient support in the army and senate and amongst the people, the old emperor was forced to vacate the throne and retire to a monastery with his eyes plucked out, or else he was murdered, depending on the wishes and temperament of his successor. The new emperor was recognised as the legal ruler from the day he was proclaimed... If, however, he had an insufficient number of allies to make the proclamation a reality, he was treated as a rebel. However, during the fight, until the day of defeat, the fact that he

According to tradition there was a division of the spectators into the supporters and the opponents of those fighting in the arena. They were distinguished by emblems, the „greens” and the „blues”, as these were the colours of the fighters in the circus. From these initial sympathies and antipathies towards the professional sportsmen there grew in the course of years two compact parties, also called factions, which came to exist independently of circus spectacles. The factions had their separate organizations and their representatives at the imperial court; the supporters of each party occupied special seats in the circus and even wore distinctive clothing. Although the parties had no established political programmes, there was great hatred between their members, a hatred sustained by the ruling classes. The financial oligarchy, rich craftsmen and merchants, usually looked to the greens for support; in that party prevailed the anti-papal, separatist tendencies, hence the support of the greens for the Monophysites. The landed aristocracy, on the other hand, were supported by the blues, who approved the pro-Roman policy of the empire⁴³. It was in the interests of the rulers to preserve lasting discord among the people, and they thus created mutual antagonisms. The emperors influenced the activities of the parties through their leaders, who, belonging to the imperial court, occupied important posts in

had been proclaimed by the army gave him a conjectural constitutional right, which could be proved or annulled by the result of the fight".

I think, however, that Diakonow, in his very well-documented work, overestimates the influence of the demes on the politics of Byzantium. We read in Diakonow (op. cit. p. 714—175): „The emperors themselves admitted that the source of their power lay in the demes. During the rising in 512 Anastasius presented himself in front of the demes in the circus without the crown, to give them to understand that he did not consider himself an emperor any more, because the people had turned their backs on him. He put his crown on only when the demes asked him to do so in appreciation of his statement.

„Justinian, during the rising 'Nika', admitted his own mistakes to the demes in the circus and made some sort of oath on the Gospel in front of the people... Often the Emperors themselves called the demes to the circus (sometimes to the battle-field or to the Church of St. Sophia) to give approval to the domestic and foreign policy during political crises or in times of war. Even more often, in critical moments, the demes appeared in the circus on their own initiative or gathered in other public places to put forward their views and demands, previously arranged among the demes, organised in factions".

⁴³ Diakonow (op. cit. p. 195 ff.), discussing the social composition of the headquarters of the two parties, assumes that among the greens (*πράξιτοι*) the commercial and industrial elements prevailed. On the other hand, in the party of the blues (*βέτετοι*), in addition to the aristocracy and landowners, there was also a minority of merchants and craftsmen. Diakonow rightly points out that the masses of both parties were socially similar and that the difference between the two was in their leadership. The masses of the two parties could not have had conflicting interests, but deep class differences separated them from their leaders.

the state hierarchy. The rulers in turn supported personally one or another. The monarchy approved of the divisions among the members of the demes, reflected as they were in the animosities between the parties, because the division of the people strengthened the position of the monarchy.

The discord in the demes, the mutual hatred of both parties, were not properly understood by their contemporaries. Procopius said, „Nobody knows why they hate each other mortally, why they fight, why one belongs to the greens, another to the blues. Everybody puts party above everything else, so that for him there is no family, no friendship, no human or divine law — he is concerned neither with state nor with country. Both women and men are possessed by this blind madness” (*Bell. Pers.* I, 24).

However, in spite of those, as Procopius calls them, mad and incomprehensible party struggles, there was occasionally an agreement among all the people when they joined together (above the head of the Caesar and his subordinates) to continue the fight against violence, exploitation and injustice.

The necessity to fight to the end the hated ruler, the officials and the possessing classes, was a kind of programme for the united parties. At critical moments the people were roused to the point of action, seeking the overthrow of the ruling emperor, war against foreigners, the replacement of hated officials and the establishment of a new power which would have the confidence of the people. By the middle of the VIIth century the parties of the circus no longer had importance in the political life of Byzantium. The financial oligarchy, which used the party of the greens in its political manoeuvres, lost its economic position in the middle of the 7th century and was no longer interested in circus factions. The military failures of Byzantium and the loss of the Eastern territories brought about a considerable decrease in commercial transactions and, in consequence, the economic collapse of the big merchants, financiers and bankers. The end of the political role of the factions did not weaken the importance of the demes. On the contrary, so long as the idea of going back to the Greek traditions prevailed in the Empire, the political importance of the demes increased. The revolutionary demonstrations of the demes revealed the social conflicts of the empire; the official religious and legal doctrine could not level down the differences of wealth among the people of the Byzantine empire.

History has recorded for us the revolution of *Nika*, which took place in the time of Justinian. The emperor obviously favoured the members of the party of the blues, called *venets*, who supported his expansionist

policy and his attempts to restore the historical empire. The blues, enjoying the support of the government, terrorized their opponents, but at the same time showed their sympathy with the emperor; in the circus they occupied seats on the right of the imperial box, thus expressing their attachment and loyalty. In spite of these mutual sympathies between the emperor and the *venets*, the interest of the people proved stronger. In August 532, in the hippodrome, the opponents of the blues, that is, the greens (called *πράσινοι*) demanded the release of certain members of their party who were imprisoned; at the same time they accused the emperor of breaking the law. To the surprise of the ruling circles, the two parties joined forces against the government.

"So long as the names of the colours divided the demes," writes Procopius, (*Bell. Pers.* I, 24), "...the ministers could govern with impunity. But when ...the demes came to an agreement and the rising broke out, the whole city showed its hatred for them (the ministers) and demanded their death... When one day the authorities responsible for the demes in Constantinople conducted a few of the rioters to the scene of execution, the members of both demes rose up in arms, freed the condemned, and afterwards took the prison by force and set free those who were detained for rioting, or for any other crime. They murdered without mercy all representatives of the government; the leading citizens fled to the other shore while the insurgents set the town on fire as if it had been conquered by an enemy. Hagia Sophia was burned, as were also the baths of Zeuxippe, the whole area between the imperial palace and the field of Mars, the big portico which stretched up to the square of Constantine and numerous palaces and precious possessions of the rich. Meanwhile the Emperor Justinian remained inactive in his palace, together with his wife and some of the senators. The rallying call of the insurgents were the words, „be victorious” (*vixa*), from which the whole rising took its name".

The antagonisms between the two parties disappeared; the people, united by hatred of the oppressors, with shouts of *nika* (victory) rushed to the quarters of the rich and surrounded the imperial palace. Constantinople was burning, and members of the landed aristocracy crossed the Bosphorus to seek refuge in the cities of Asia Minor. Justinian, by means of hired troops, restored order with difficulty, sending his best commanders, Belisarius and Mundus, against the revolutionary mob. With the death of some thirty thousand people (*Bell. Pers.*) the hired troops quelled the revolutionary outburst of those who, in the name of victory, rose up against the rich. Although the main forces of the insurgents were broken up, for a long time fires and armed demonstrations testified to their hatred of the state.

Imperial edicts showered down and the smallest disobedience was severely punished, for example, common theft was punished by cutting off the hands. The people were deprived of weapons, Justinian decreed that no private person could manufacture arms, and the workers in the state arms-factories were forbidden to sell anything except short knives to private persons. Disturbances also took place in Alexandria, and so the emperor ordered the local powers to take special precautions for surveillance.

The prohibition on arms was, however, not kept for long. When Byzantium was facing an invasion of Slavs and Avars the emperor Tiberius II (578—582), having only an undisciplined army at his disposal, armed the demes for the defence of the city. When Tiberius died, transferring his power to Maurice (582—602), a man associated with the aristocratic groups, the armed people of the capital could again voice their demands. Constantinople again became the scene of popular demonstrations and Maurice was overthrown in 602. Power was transferred to Phocas (602—610), a military commander famous for his animosity towards the senate and aristocracy. At first he ruled with the support of the people and of the soldiers. Soon, however, he caused resentment among the people by his religious policy. In order to maintain good relations with the Pope, Phocas persecuted the Monophysites, refused the Patriarch of Constantinople the title *oecumenical*, and attacked the Syrian Jews, suspecting them of having contacts with unfriendly Persia. By yielding to the demands of Rome he lost the friendship of the people. Although in 608 a column dedicated to Phocas was erected in the Roman Forum, as a symbol of friendship with Byzantium and the glory of the emperor, he lost the support of the people. The Byzantine aristocracy, using armies stationed in Africa, easily overthrew him.

The revolutionary movement of the people came to the fore in the 8th century, in the time of the iconoclasts. It was especially strong among the followers of the Paulicians, who were extremists. The followers of the sect of the Paulicians, popular among the Byzantine peasantry and plebeian masses, employed diatribes against the cult of images. At the same time they spread radical social ideas directed against the wealthy classes, and especially against the organization and policy of the Church. The popular and radical social movement of the Paulicians was used to advantage by the moderate adherents of iconoclasm, who were patronized by Leo III and later by Constantine V. In the fight against the monasteries the vast estates of the religious orders aroused the greedy anxiety of the magnates and the hatred of the poor.

The disruption of the serf-economy created favourable conditions for the eruption of social movements. The Paulician opposition to the cult of images and relics came to Byzantium from Asia Minor. It appears that the iconoclastic ideas of the Paulicians were formed under the influence of the followers of Islam, who in their beliefs rejected the cult of holy images. In the empire the chief effect of the doctrine of iconoclasm, taken up by Leo III, was to unite the military aristocracy in the provinces and the plebeian masses, who supported the emperor in his Church policy. In the name of the fight against the cult of images and relics, Leo III and his successors increased the income of the treasury by confiscating the wealth and estates of the Church and particularly that of the monasteries⁴⁴. The policy of the iconoclastic emperors must have enjoyed great popularity if the people, long after the death of Constantine V, could believe that he would soon be resurrected and restore order in the state. The historian Theophanes says: „Many years after the death of Constantine V the people, when hearing of military defeats, gathered at the tomb of the beloved emperor and shouted: „Rise up and save our dying country”⁴⁵.

In the third decade of the 9th century throughout the territories of the Byzantine empire occurred an agrarian revolution, aimed directly against the big estate owners who were trying to curtail the liberties of the free peasants. During the constant wars against Islam the position of the military commanders was strengthened, as they became owners of vast estates and skilfully managed to combine military power with economic influence. The Armenian commanders in particular took possession of numerous landed estates, and this gave them independence in their relations with the imperial court and unlimited power over the free peasants. The new military landed aristocracy (*δυνατοί*) came into acute conflict with the peasant settlers, who had to fight with arms for their rights and liberty. In the spring of 821, Thomas, a Slavonic military colonist, entered the Empire with the support of Arabic troops. He attempted to obtain power by launching a popular slogan of war against the hated imperial power. „So Thomas”, writes the historian, Theophanes Continuatus, „taking over the state taxes for his own use, won over people to his side by lavish gifts, and thus from a lowly station rose to the heights. Those who were nurtured by a passion for wealth and revolution, he befriended by promises and kindness,

⁴⁴ М. Я. Сюзюмов: Проблемы иконоборчества в Византии, Ученые записки Свердловского государственного педагогического института, 1948, 4, р. 101 ff. puts forward the thesis that the iconoclasts took away only the ecclesiastical and monastic treasures and not the estates.

⁴⁵ Theophanes p. 501, 10, de Boor.

others, who were doubtful, by persuasion and force. Thus a civil war started... The serfs rose against their masters, soldiers against officers, military units against commanders. The whole of Asia groaned under an immense burden of misery. The Asiatic cities, wherever they were, surrendered to Thomas in fear; those cities which tried to keep faithful to the emperor and resisted a little longer had, after surrendering, to pay for their resistance with the death of many of their inhabitants and great loss of property. In such a way the whole of Asia declared themselves for him..."⁴⁶.

Thomas thus became the leader of a social revolution and the masses of Macedonian and Thracian peasants gathered under his standard; the fleet chose his side, the demes of the Greek cities and slaves also stayed with him. Byzantium lived through a phase of revolution directly aimed against the feudal demands of the big estate owners. After 2 years, in 823, the insurgents were defeated, and all those who had fought for their rights were destroyed in bloody warfare. „Some of the citizens”, says Theophanes, „came to an agreement with the emperor and, after securing his pardon, captured Thomas, bound him and brought him to the emperor. Following an old custom of the rulers, the emperor had Thomas thrown under his feet, put his feet on Thomas’ neck and ordered that his legs and arms be cut off and that the mutilated body be put on a donkey and taken round the city for everybody to see... In such a way, in October, the usurper ended his life in slow tortures like a hunted animal...”⁴⁷.

Contemporary chronicles say that the landed aristocracy soaked the earth with the blood of the revolutionaries. The revolution of Thomas was strangled because of the armed intervention of the Bulgarian ruler, Omortag. He himself was threatened by an uprising because the masses of the Bulgarian peasants approved and supported the peasant revolution in Byzantium.

In the first half of the 10th century, weighed down by taxes and the duties of serfdom, oppressed by the arbitrary seizure of land, the peasants again rose against the feudal lords. The direct cause of the revolutionary disturbances was hunger, which descended upon Byzantium after the catastrophically bad harvest in 928. For six years afterwards, with some intervals, the empire was convulsed with the struggles of a peasant revolution led by the fearless Basil Copperhand. The legends say that his hand was cut off when he rose for the first time against the magnates, and that after his escape from his enemies he used a copper-hand with a sword attached to it. After heavy fighting

⁴⁶ Theophanes Continuatus II, 11 (p. 53 Bonn).

⁴⁷ Theophanes Continuatus II, 19 (p. 69 Bonn).

the revolution was squashed. Its result was a bill in 934, partially satisfying the demands of the peasants. The statute ordered the feudal lords to return all the land they had seized⁴⁸. In 1182 another rising broke out, led by a member of the ruling Comnenan dynasty, the sixty-seven-year-old Andronicus. The revolution was mainly directed against foreigners and particularly against the Venetians and Genoans who had gradually captured Byzantine trade. Andronicus, in his three years of rule, was originally backed by the aristocracy, who were anxious to curtail foreign influences in Byzantium. The new ruler undertook some serious reforms restricting the influence of the aristocracy and bureaucracy and tried to improve the economic and political position of the masses, who according to Eustathios of Thessalonica, loved Andronicus more than God. However, the aristocracy, joining with the foreigners, at once stopped this last attempt at reform in Byzantium⁴⁹.

Both the revolution in 1258 at Nicaea in Asia Minor and the rising of the peasants there in 1262 ended in defeat, bringing complete victory to the aristocracy in Asia Minor. A hundred years later the Eastern Empire became again a battlefield of bloodthirsty social struggles.

In the middle of the 14th century, in many towns and municipal districts, arose a popular movement of Zealots; this included peasants and townspeople, but the sailors were predominant. The insurrectionists rose against the aristocracy and demanded the liquidation of private and Church estates. The revolutionary movement was at its most powerful at Thessalonica between 1342 and 1349. For seven years the plebs ruled in the town, confiscating the estates of the Church and of the patricians, abolishing the privileges of the nobles and destroying long-established traditions, all for the sake of the non-possessing classes.

We know the doctrine of the Zealots only from the accounts of historians unsympathetic to them, and especially from the prosecutor's speech when the revolution was being crushed (the speech is preserved in manuscript No. 1213 at the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris)⁵⁰.

⁴⁸ The peasant rising of 928—934 is discussed in the following monograph: А. П. Каждан: „Великое восстание” Василия Медной руки, Византийский временник, IV, 1951, p. 73—83. The author draws attention to the very scanty sources that exist for this rising.

⁴⁹ *Eustathii metropolitae Thessalonicensis opuscula*. Ed. Th. L. F. Tafel. Frankfurt a/M 1832, p. 273.

⁵⁰ The movement of Zealots is discussed by O. Tafrali in *Thessalonique au quatorzième siècle*, Paris 1912 p. 265 ff. (we find here the above-mentioned prosecution speech against the Zealots) and by C. Diehl in *Journées révolutionnaires bizantines*, „La Revue de Paris”, 35, 1928, No. 21, p. 151—172. The movement of the Zealots appears to have been a continuation of a plebeian current whose begin-

The chief principle of the Zealots was the common good. They understood this to justify the taking over of large properties for the benefit of the democratic society of the Zealots. „The rulers”, argued the insurrectionists, „can deprive the rich of their estates and use them for social purposes, even using violence for the sake of the common good”⁵¹. They refused to acknowledge the sanctity either of custom or of written laws. They issued new revolutionary edicts reducing the taxes for the lower classes and annulling their debts. They also subjected the Church to the restrictions applied to estates, and in particular deprived the monasteries of their wealth, leaving them only a bare means of existence. They abolished the immunity of the churches, cancelled the laws allowing legacies to be made to churches or monasteries, reserving for themselves the right to appoint various dignitaries in the Church. In their fight against the abuses of the Church they often used the sign of the cross, which was their symbol. „Taking the cross from the altars”, writes the historian Joannes Kantakucenos, „they took it as their symbol, proclaiming that under that sign they would conduct war against their enemies”⁵². In their political programme they represented an extreme democracy; they introduced mass rallies, filled government posts with properly elected candidates, instituted equal rights for all.

The doctrine of the Zealots was formed in revolutionary fights, in the negation of the tradition of established privileges. Believing deeply in the right of their cause, they said: „What is curious in the fact that, having taken the land of the Church, we fed many poor people?... It will not be an injury to the monasteries, as they have enough left for their needs, and it will not be going against the will of the donator, who wanted to please God and help the poor... How do we break the law if we repair the roofs and broken-down lodgings of the poor, if we take care of the fields and pastures to feed those who fight for freedom...? We do not increase our personal wealth, do not decorate the houses, and when issuing orders we always have in mind the common good”⁵³.

Whereas the initial stimuli of the movement of the Zealots were hunger and exploitation by the rich, their political programme was in fact considerably influenced by the republican cities of Italy, whose constitutions were designed to achieve a higher standard of living.

nings go back to the meetings of the two circus parties. The continuity of the revolutionary tradition is also pointed out by P. Charanis in *Internal strife in Byzantium during the 14th cent.*, „Byzantium”, vol. XV, 1940—1941, p. 208—230.

⁵¹ O. Tafrali; op. cit. p. 265, 266.

⁵² Ioannes Kantakucenos III, 38 (II. p. 234 Bonn).

⁵³ C. Diehl; op. cit. p. 170.

The movement of the Zealots covered the whole Empire. From the historical sources we learn that „the rising spread through the Empire like a terrible and cruel epidemic, attacking many who formerly were quiet and moderate... And so all the cities rose against the aristocracy... The whole empire was in the throes of the most cruel and desperate struggle... The people were ready to rise in arms under the slightest provocation and committed the most violent deeds because they hated the rich...”⁵⁴.

The defeat of the rising of the Zealots destroyed all possibility of restoring the economic-political structure of the state; there was no real force in the empire which could aim at reform⁵⁵.

4. SCEPTICISM AMONG THE INTELLECTUALS AND IN THE CLOISTERS

The raising of the Christian religion to the status of the official doctrine, whose observance was backed by force, the fruitless dogmatic quarrels only increasing antagonism among the population, the religious policy of the emperors, all must have been objected to by critically thinking persons. Although Hellenism was officially persecuted, the leading members of the possessing classes followed its precepts for many centuries and made it the basis of their education.

During the first decades of the 6th century the work of Boethius (480—525), *De consolatione philosophiae*, enjoyed great renown and popularity. The author took up the ideas of the Greek philosophers and translated many of them into Latin, somewhat to the displeasure of the Church.

In the Hellenic traditions carried on by Byzantium two trends can be clearly distinguished, the Platonic and the Aristotelian, both veiled in mysticism. The first was based, until 529 A. D., on the Athenian Academy. Neoplatonism here has been described as a mixture of stoicism, epicureanism, scepticism, and the teaching of Plato and Aristotle⁵⁶. The followers of Neoplatonism gave the Hellenic movement its tone, formed special organisations, practised pagan cults in private

⁵⁴ *Ioannes Kantakuzenos* III, 28 (II p. 177 Bonn).

⁵⁵ А. Бергер: Демократическая революция в Византии XIV века, Архив К. Маркса и Ф. Энгельса, Книга V, 1930, р. 455 ff., giving an account of the movement of the Zealots, compares them to the extreme left wing of the French Revolution. It would seem that this is an unjust view, because the Zealots did not form part of a wide social current, but were rather a compact and self-sufficient revolutionary movement.

⁵⁶ К. Маркс и Ф. Энгельс: Соч. 1932, 122.

houses. The followers of Aristotelianism were centred in Alexandria. In the 6th and 7th centuries the latter movement also included some enemies of Christianity. The traditions of positive scientific work, study of sources, interest in mathematics, logic and natural sciences, curbed the spread of Neoplatonic and Christian mysticism. Simplikios, expelled from Athens by Justinian, tried to combine Neoplatonism with Aristotelian philosophy against the teachings of the Church. As dangerous to Christianity was another Athenian philosopher, Damaskios, who, together with Simplikios and five professors, had to leave Athens. Although the Athenian Academy ceased to exist, the two trends of Hellenic philosophy constantly, but with varying force, influenced Christianity.

From the 7th century, when Byzantium suffered the loss of much territory and when the gradual dissolution of the serf-economy became more serious, the ruling classes fell under the spell of mysticism. The main role in spreading mysticism in the East must be attributed to Maximilian the Confessor. A hundred years later John Damascene, by his work on the sources of knowledge, laid the foundations of medieval scholasticism. He argued on the basis of Aristotle's philosophy that to prove the dogmas of faith one can use pagan philosophy, which may thus become the servant of theology.

Platonism prevailed until the 8th century, but later the followers of Christianity officially and more and more often referred to Aristotle. The Patriarch of Constantinople, Photius (ca. 820 — ca. 893), gave precedence to the Stagirite, Psellos (1018—1096), in his quarrel with Xiphilinus, specifically quoted Plato.

At that time there were in Byzantium two schools of philosophy and literature. One, deriving from Photius, leaned towards Aristotle; its followers were under the influence of ancient historians and orators and devoted their attention to epics and elegies. There existed another school, hostile to the former, whose chief exponent was Leo Choiros-factus, a man sympathetic to Platonism and Neoplatonism. In this school the cult of Greek tragedy flourished and attempts were made to revive ancient music. The school was violently attacked by the pupils of Photius, who accused it of Hellenism and paganism. Another charge made against it implied that it rejected Christianity and accepted the philosophy of Plato and Epicurus. We have from that time a virulent pamphlet by Arethas, in very violent language, to undermine the popularity of the followers of Plato, who were, according to the author, making more adherents⁵⁷.

⁵⁷ The MSS of Archbishop Arethas (who lived at the turn of the ninth century) is preserved in the Museum of History in Moscow (MSS No. 315). We find

Justinian, from the first days of his reign, fought against Hellenism. In his opinion any doctrine contrary to Christianity was a „madness of faithless Hellenists” (Cod. Just. I, 11), who ought to be persecuted and put to death. Imperial decrees were mostly directed against the Neoplatonists, who were the most numerous and who were forbidden to organize associations or even to discuss their views in private houses; and all people „infected with the illness of faithless Hellenists” (Cod. Just. I, 11), were deprived of the right of teaching.

In 529, after 900 years of existence, by the decree of the emperor the Academy of Athens was closed and all the professors expelled. They found refuge at the court of the Persian king, Chosroes, who was very popular in Byzantium.

Constantinople was very well aware of the ideological conflict which Persia underwent during the reign of Kawad and his son Chosroes. Liberal and magnanimous toward the Byzantine intellectuals, Chosroes was at the same time ruthlessly fighting all social ideas. These ideas had spread in the form of a religious doctrine with the friendly support of Kawad, who was recognized in the capital of the Eastern Empire.

A little earlier, in the reign of Justin (518—527), the bewildered citizens of Byzantium had heard of Kawad's proposal that the Roman Emperor should adopt the Persian prince Chosroes. The proposal was declined. It was well known that Persia was torn by an internal struggle, finding expression in the doctrine of Mazdah, who called himself a prophet. He proclaimed his socio-religious teaching during the reign of Kawad (494—531). He asked for social reforms; he taught that the system of common property should be revived, that all men are brothers, that all derive from the same parents and so there are no grounds for inequality. He opposed violently any family ties. In a word, he considered that the source and cause of all evil is the institution of property and the family, and he insisted that to find happiness is impossible without the abolition of both institutions. Kawad favoured the doctrine of Mazdah and thus brought people to his side in opposing the Persian aristocracy. However, the aristocratic circles, hostile to a radical social doctrine and against Mazdah, won over to their side the crown prince Chosroes. The latter had already in the lifetime of his father, Kawad, opposed the spreading of the doctrine and after succeeding to the throne he liquidated all the followers of social reforms, all the followers of Mazdah and the passive opposition of the supporters of Mani.

the Greek text with a Russian translation and notes in the following work:
 М. А. Шангин: Византийские политические деятели первой половины X в., Византийский сборник, Москва — Leningrad 1945, p. 228—248.

The ruling classes called him Chosroesus the Magnificent — they found in him the defender of their endangered position.

Chosroesus eliminated all tendencies towards social reform in Persia, but at the same time he treated liberally and with friendliness those refugees from Byzantium who sought asylum in his state because of the Christian fanaticism of the emperor⁵⁸. In 532 Chosroesus signed a treaty with Justinian whereby all the expelled professors could go back to Athens and were given the freedom to express their opinions.

A special emphasis was laid by Justinian on the necessity of closing the school of law at Alexandria, where there was strong opposition to the religious policy of the emperors. That traditional centre of mathematics and the natural sciences was not easily won over to mystical philosophy. Simplikios' commentaries on Aristotle were very popular among thoughtful circles in Alexandria, who accepted the concept of religious mysticism with reluctance. Alexandria, with its lead in natural sciences, had retained a relatively widespread independence of thought, in spite of the aggressive policy of the emperors against the centres of Hellenism, where criticism and scepticism grew apace.

The religious doctrine forcibly imposed by the emperors provoked many objections from intelligent circles. The populace, reacting emotionally to legends, superstitions and miracles, was easily drawn into fanatical struggles. In this atmosphere of intolerance many educated people pretended to be Christians. Some of them held important posts; it is well known that even in Justinian's closest entourage there was no enthusiasm for religious doctrine. Tribonian, the author of the codex, a man, according to Procopius, „of such incredible knowledge, that no one among his contemporaries could surpass or even equal him” (Bell. Pers, I, 24), viewed Christianity sceptically and did not conceal his sympathy with Greek philosophy. An accusation of sympathy with Hellenism was also raised against the well-educated John of Cappadocia, who for many years took second place after the emperor as *praefectus praetorio per orientem*. Scepticism bordering on complete pessimism is perhaps most to be noted in the activities and writings of Procopius, the historian of the age of Justinian.

In the reign of Anastasius Procopius came to Constantinople from his native Cesarea to acquire the art of rhetoric. Procopius entered the entourage of Belisarius as a simple clerk, but, thanks to his abilities, he soon became the adviser of the commander-in-chief. He accompa-

⁵⁸ The doctrine of Ahura Mazdah is discussed by Н. В. Пигулевская: Идея равенства в учении маздакитов in a collective work, Из истории социально-политических идей, Москва 1955, p. 97—101, and also by A. Christensen in: *L'Iran sous les Sassanides*, 3rd ed. Copenhague 1944, p. 345 ff.

nied the Byzantine armies in the war against Persia, took part in the battles against the Vandals, and later against the Goths. While he was in the capital, between 545 and 550, he wrote an account of Justinian's wars, at the same time outlining with admiration the emperor's building programme. Showered with privileges at court, he took a very active part in the political life of Byzantium; he became a senator and was even nominated by the emperor to be *praefectus urbi* of Constantinople.

In spite of such glory Procopius wrote another true history, not available to his contemporaries, a thorough accusation of the court and of the policy of Justinian. He made the accusation that Justinian, after the death of Zeno, the grandson of Anastasius, had taken possession of a vast estate and that his aim was to take over all the possessions of the aristocracy. „Without any proofs of any crime”, he goes on, „Justinian tried some for belief in deities, others for heresy and faulty observance of the Christian faith, others for homosexuality or love affairs with nuns or any other relationship contrary to law. He also accused some of attempts on his life or of using forbidden words and expressions and declared himself the heir of both the dead and the living...” (*Hist. arcana*, XIX, 11).

Cruelty, lawless force, false denunciation, hatred, cowardice, lies became the *personae dramatis* of the secret history of Procopius. Distrust in the regime made Procopius sceptical; he realized how the daily behaviour of the emperor contradicted his doctrine, how practice contradicted the official concepts of the state. „Neither law,” says Procopius, „nor decrees had any stability or force, everywhere lawlessness and violence prevailed. The structure of the state was like a tyranny, not like one which is consistent and firmly established, but a tyranny in which everything kept changing every day and in which everything was always starting again from the beginning” (*Hist. Arcana* VII, 31).

Officially Procopius belonged to the church — it was an essential condition of his brilliant career — but in fact he judged events and his contemporaries very sceptically and was convinced that man is helpless and subject to blind fate. This educated sceptic could not see the sense of religious disputes, and in the quarrels about the nature of Christ he saw a communal madness. „I think all disputes about the nature of God are nonsensical madness; man cannot even know his own nature and therefore one should abandon all deliberations on the nature of God” (*Bell. Got.* I, 3). It seems that the sceptical historian is overcome by pessimism when he looks at his country, badly affected by war, beggary, inflation, ruin of roads and waterways. Helpless, he would say of his times, „Universal sadness prevails, nobody hopes for anything better, nobody finds life joyful” (*Hist. arcana* XXVI, 10).

A more representative example of scepticism in the ruling classes of the 6th century was Agathias (536—582), an orator and Byzantine lawyer who continued Procopius' history of the reign of Justinian. Agathias looked with complete disbelief at the dogmas proclaimed by the Church. Brought up in the tradition of Hellenic thought, he saw in the last philosophers of the Academy of Athens (those expelled by Justinian) the foremost thinkers of Byzantium. He was impressed above all by the independence and courage of those philosophers who stood out against Christianity. He himself viewed all ideas of absolute truth sceptically, was an enemy of all opinions imposed by force, and condemned the Church's fight against heretics. In his history we read: "To think and believe that one can understand the essence of things is conceit and twice as stupid as ignorance" (III, 16). "Those who have not attained truth need help rather than any insult, because they wander and stumble not intentionally but in a search for good." (I, 8).

In his political doctrine this aristocratic sceptic expressed the tendencies of those who wanted to restore the pagan splendour of historical Rome. Disliking and even hostile towards the people, he based the greatness of the state, according to Plato's teaching, on the government of perfect rulers. In their minds and character he sees the essential conditions of the restoration of past glory. Agathias discusses the deeds of Justinian with respect and admiration, but he views the activities of the people with suspicion. "The people cannot properly estimate problems and things, because they easily fall into moods and ecstasies, judging according to their advantages and desires"⁵⁹.

The intelligent scepticism of circles brought up in the spirit of Hellenic philosophy did not appeal to the people; they were influenced more by the ideas of Christian mysticism or of pessimism.

Among a wide section of the people one sign of pessimism was a strong tendency towards the hermit's life and a withdrawal from active life, together with contempt for honours and riches. The Eastern concepts of passivity and pessimism, and hermitical life, the teaching of the cynics to abandon the conventions and return to nature, coupled with Christian doctrine, brought about a revival of organized monastic life. So not only a love of God led people to adopt an ascetic life in a hermitage; more often the decision was a kind of protest against the reality crushing the helpless individual. Here came town people, escaping from their families

⁵⁹ Agathias II, 11 (*Historici Graeci minores*, ed. L. Dindorf, II, Leipzig 1871, p. 198. Social and political opinions are discussed by M. B. Левченко: Византийский историк Агафий Мирнийский и его мировоззрение, Византийский временник, 1950, III, p. 62—84. M. B. Левченко published in 1953 a translation of the history of Agathias: Агафий, О царствовании Юстиниана, Москва — Leningrad 1953.

and social obligations, military deserters unjustly condemned, sluggards or people tired of life. Masses flocked to the cloisters and were accepted without discrimination. "Whoever comes to the monastery", says John of Ephesus, "having committed a crime because of slavery or debt, a quarrel with his wife or theft, and comes to escape the court, is here received without any difficulty. They do not consider that in the hearts of such people nestle unbridled desires and worldly habits" ⁶⁰.

Wars, poverty, tax exploitation, breaking of the law, government abuses, all formed a basis for the popularity of monastic ideals, which were particularly widespread in the Eastern parts of the Empire, under the influence of the Buddhist monasteries and Egyptian hermits. Already in the 3rd century there were many monasteries in the East, particularly in Egypt, where they were organised by Pachomius. In the 6th century Egypt had the greatest number of monks, followed by Syria and Palestine. Originally the monks lived far away from human habitations, but eventually monasteries were also founded in cities like Alexandria or Antioch. In Constantinople itself in the 6th century there were 76 religious houses. The life of the monks was organised either into a *κοινόβιον*, where they lived in a community, or into a *μοναστήριον*, where they lived a hermit's life. The ever increasing number of monks leading the lives of beggars seriously affected the organisation of the state. The ideology of passivity absorbed in unproductive contemplation, or following ascetic practices, had to be broken down, asceticism condemned, and the monasteries incorporated into productive life; above all, the wandering hermits, who were a pest to the inhabitants and to the government, had to be controlled. The Church took the religious houses in hand, and made the monks into a fanatical army; the passivity and pessimism of monastic life was transformed into a useful weapon of the Church hierarchy ⁶¹. Now reli-

⁶⁰ *Anecdota Syriaca*. Ed. J. P. N. Land; II, Leiden 1868, 154. John of Ephesus was a missionary and a chronicler of the Church in the times of Justinian. His work is discussed in the book by А. Дьяконов: Иоанн Эфесский и его церковно-исторические труды, Petersburg 1908, p. 3. We find references to the monasteries of John of Ephesus on pages 16 and 394.

⁶¹ „In one church alone, that of St. Sophia in Constantinople, in 563 there were 60 presbyters, 100 deacons, 40 deaconesses, 90 hypodeacons, 40 lectors and 25 cantors — altogether 425 ecclesiastics. To these have to be added 100 doorkeepers. Under Heraclius in 612 the number of clerics at St. Sophia's was increased to 80 presbyters, 150 deacons, 40 deaconesses, 70 hypodeacons, 160 lectors, 25 cantors... Not less numerous were the clergy in secondary provincial cities like Edessa, which had 200 clergymen, or even more, because even its bishop at the Council of Chalcedon could not give the exact number of the clergy in his town... There was a large number of monasteries in the Eastern Empire... In Constantinople in 518 there were 56 monasteries and in 536 as many as 76... According to a chronicler at Oxyrhynchos the clergy equalled in number the lay population... Under Justinian,

gious life could also develop in the West, where the Eastern models were transferred; the rule of Pachomius was translated into Latin and organizational forms for the monasteries were worked out.

The founder of the monastery at Monte Cassino, Benedict of Nursia, wrote his rule in the first half of the sixth century. He divided the monks into categories, distinguishing 1) *anachorites*, who fight a lonely fight with the sins of the flesh and spirit; 2) *sarabaitai*, wandering in small groups and subject to no discipline whatsoever; 3) *girovites*, beggar-monks who wander through the state like *sarabaitai* and are as much of a nuisance; and 4) monks who live in a community, an organized army of God under the direction of superiors (*militans sub regula vel abbatem*).

Recognizing only the fourth group as monks, Benedict described precisely the principles of communal life in the monasteries, the subjection of younger brethren to the elder ones, the food, the work. The rule imposed on the monks comprises: *oboedientia* (obedience), *taciturnitas* (silence), *humilitas* (humility), and the duty to work is expressed in the principle that "*otiositas inimica est animae*" (laziness is the enemy of the soul). This attempt to take over the monasteries was successful and it broke down passivity and pessimism. The monasteries now became a weapon of the Church.

In Byzantium the government for a long time supported the founding of monasteries, considering their development both laudable to God and politically sound and good. "If those clean hands and holy souls will pray for the Empire, through such love of God the army will be stronger, the prosperity of the state increased, agriculture and commerce more flourishing" (Nov. 138, 5).

The greatest development of the monasteries in Byzantium took place between the 5th and the 7th centuries. Later, when the position of the state became rather difficult, the emperors realized that it might be a danger to the state if the Church or the monasteries held too much property. The privileges of the Church as regards taxation and the incessant flow of men to the cloister caused serious difficulties. The pious hopes of Justinian that the prayers of the monks would bring the Empire to its former glory and prosperity proved futile. Caesar Maurice in 593 restricted the freedom of entry into religious orders and forbade all state officials to hold any posts in the Church. Above all it was forbidden to enter a monastery before doing military service, because that was a common way of escaping one's duties towards the state. The edicts of the Caesars led

as a result of the mission of John of Ephesus, 70,000 pagans were baptized by force in Asia Minor. For them in 542 — 571 12 monasteries and 99 churches were built...
М. В. Левченко: Церковные имущества V—VII вв. в Восточно-Римской империи, Византийский временник, II, 1949, p. 19 ff.

to an organized reaction on the part of the Church. Pope Gregory I protested in a special letter to the Byzantine ruler: "I cannot be silent," writes the Pope, "because his law is directed against God Himself and I was given power over all people by gracious Heaven to help those who want to attain good, to prepare for men an easier way to Heaven and subordinate the secular empire to divine rule. You on the contrary decide openly that he who has entered the army can only serve Christ after finishing his service or if his health warrants an earlier release. But Christ plainly emphasizes: From a notary I made you the leader of the excubites, from the leader of the excubites I made you an emperor, from an emperor, an imperator, and even the father of an imperator. I put priests under your power and now you turn away your soldiers from my service" ⁶². The constant growth of the Church estates and of the power of the monasteries brought about the movement of the iconoclasts. Under cover of the fight against the cult of pictures, the imperial power, supported by the army and part of the aristocracy and episcopate, was enabled to take over ecclesiastical and monastic riches. Constantine V (741—775) carried out a mass confiscation of monastic lands, distributed them among his forces, and forced the monks to return to a normal existence in the state. In 765 the inhabitants of Byzantium witnessed an unusual spectacle; Constantine V ordered the monks to contract marriages and organized in the hippodrome a procession of monks and nuns, who were, according to Theophanes, accompanied by the shouts of an excited populace overjoyed by the dissolution of the monasteries.

Revolutionary demonstrations of the masses, and particularly those of the supporters of the Paulicians and the rising of Thomas the Slave, brought about a compromise between the supporters and enemies of the iconoclastic movement, for the sake of the unity of the ruling classes. The confiscated lands of the monasteries remained in the hands of the military aristocracy. After taking over the monastic lands the emperors were no longer interested in struggling with the iconoclasts. In 843 the Empress Theodora arranged a reconciliation by which the iconoclasts made concessions to the worshippers of icons.

In a religious chronicle of 843 we read: „Realizing that nothing will more favour the security of the state than the ending of ecclesiastical struggles and controversies, the Empress Theodora, after consultations with the higher state officials, called to her all the influential monks, instructing them to solve the problem of the cult of pictures... requested the monks to find in the holy books texts to prove the necessity of worshipping pictures... suggested a council and issued a manifesto to the na-

tion... the opponents of the cult of pictures, changed their views and said anathema on the enemies of the holy pictures" ⁶³.

The discontinuation of the struggle with the monasteries led to a new increase in monastic riches. However, after over a hundred years, during the reign of Nicephor Phocas II (963—969), further restrictions were put upon properties, though dogmatic controversies were not involved. The Emperor tried in his novella to justify logically his decision to impoverish the monastic estates. At the end of the „novella” we read: "Whoever has attained the faculty of seeing through the outer illusions of things and is able to reach the root will understand that the edict issued by us will be useful to all true Christians and to the whole population" ⁶⁴. Phocas forbade new monasteries to be founded, forbade the clergy to possess any real estate, and at the same time ordered the landed aristocracy to release estates previously occupied by them. This policy, however, met with no support and raised a strong reaction in the aristocracy and clergy. The edicts and laws of Nicephor were abolished by Basil II (976—1025) who considered them ..."to be a constant cause and source of worries and of a great revolution in the state... Not only was sacrilege committed against the churches and houses of God, but we also sinned against God himself... Thus nothing ever succeeds now and no calamity passes us by" ⁶⁵. The social legislation of Phocas is an exception in the reactionary policy of the rulers of the Macedonian dynasty.

In the XIth century we find among the ruling circles of Byzantium a typical attitude of political opportunism bordering on ethical nihilism. The ideology of the courtiers is reflected in the political activities of Michael Psellos (1018—1097). That talented adviser of the emperors possessed an all-embracing knowledge of his times. The Empress Anna Comnena wrote about him: "Psellos, thanks to his inborn talents and quickness of mind, or perhaps thanks to divine help... attained the summits of wisdom, mastered Hellenic and Chaldeic learning, and was at that time an intellectual celebrity" ⁶⁶. Psellos possessed the rare faculty of detecting and abusing the weaknesses of the rulers, and this enabled him to keep his high position as adviser to as many as ten emperors. In his external servility toward the rulers Psellos overstepped the limits of moderation, he called the emperors immortal gods in whose hands is the fate of the world, the happiness, the life and death of men. His excessive servility

⁶² Greg. Epist. III, 61. Ed. P. Ewald and L. Hartmann **M.G.H.I.**, Berlin 1891.

⁶³ *Acta Sanctorum VII, Martii. II*, Paris-Rome 1865, p. 314 ff.

⁶⁴ *Nikephoros Phokas coll. III. nov. 19. (Jus Graeco-Romanum*, ed. J. and P. Zepos, I, Athens 1931, p. 252).

⁶⁵ Coll. III nov. 26.

⁶⁶ *Annae Comnenae „Alexiad”* Ed. Reifferacheid, Leipzig 1884. I, 179.

and humble submission to the emperors cannot, however, veil the great importance of Psellos as a scholar. The fame of his knowledge reached beyond the frontiers of the Empire; he knew the wisdom of both East and West. When the priests accused him of glorifying the Hellenic thinkers, particularly Plato, whose system he considered as the "philosophy of all philosophy", Psellos responded, "If I belong to the Christian Church this does not imply that I have to forego the knowledge of all the wisest achievements because I do not intend to renounce the understanding of existing things... In prayer I come near to God, but when I walk on earth, I occupy myself with study"⁶⁷. Although he openly based his work on the system of Plato and the Neoplatonists, Psellos had his own system of knowledge. He attributed intuitive knowledge proper to theological thinking, which is the opposite of logical, strictly scientific thinking. In the latter field he gave priority to mathematics, considering its rules as models for all branches of knowledge. Influenced by Plato, he spoke for the reign of philosophers, whose decisions stood above even the law itself. In his „Apology” he says with sorrow: „What high prestige did philosophy have in previous times; now people look at it with contempt, considering jurisprudence as much more useful and important”. He realized how feeble and weak were the rulers and asked that philosophers should take part in active political life. About himself he said: "From my youngest days I fulfilled two tasks; on the one hand I occupied myself with philosophy, and on the other with affairs of state. Thus I did not shut myself in a chamber and busy myself with wisdom only, nor did I do what is only done in the offices... Holding in my hands the books of wisdom I also took part in affairs of state"⁶⁸.

Psellos declared that the highest power should be in the hands of a secular ruler and to the ecclesiastics should only be left the problems of faith. In a letter to the Patriarch Cellularius he writes: "Let there be one ruler, one emperor... to the one it was given to govern, to the other (the Patriarch) to fulfill ecclesiastical duties. Lift thy hands to heaven and implore peace for men, but let the affairs of state remain in the hands of those to whom they belong. Do not order, do not rule, because the majority do not wish it"⁶⁹.

What is striking in this very wise man is an incomprehensible toleration of law-breaking. It could not be in the name of Platonic ideas that Psellos advised magistrates to disregard laws, saying that justice is an attribute of the saints only. In an opportunist manner he instructs offi-

⁶⁷ Michael Psellos, epist. 175 *Bibliotheca graeca medii aevii*. Ed. Sathas, V, Venice-Paris 1876, p. 450.

⁶⁸ Michael Psellos, apol. Ed. cit. p. 175 ff.

⁶⁹ Michael Psellos, epist. 207, Ed. cit. p. 512.

cials: "Looking, do not see; listening, do not hear.. if you wish to avoid an accusation of illegal behaviour" ⁷⁰.

The personality, activity and views of Psellos show a combination of great talent with scepticism, opportunism and even moral nihilism, so characteristic of high courtiers in the Byzantine Empire ⁷¹.

At the turn of the 12th century, when the Empire was declining, ideas of complete pessimism and disbelief in the state are expressed by the official historian Nicetas Choniates (ca. 1155—1213). His history is an illustration of the gradual decay of Byzantium. He lays blame for the pitiful fate of the state on the Comnenian dynasty, the organisation of power, and the clergy. He considers that they are all marked by duplicity, servility, laziness, sloth, egoism and profligacy. About his contemporaries he speaks with reproach that „they have lost military courage, justice, patriotism, generosity, and, apart from their name (of Romans), they hardly differ from the barbarians” ⁷².

Unfriendly towards revolutionary movements, sceptical towards the ruling class, Nicetas lost all his faith in Byzantium, defeated as it was. His only consolation was the memory of the past glory of Rome, which he revived in full splendour in his history.

Gregorius Gemistus (Plethon) closes the history of Byzantine political thought. His long life, of nearly a hundred years, covers the last century of the Eastern Empire. The fame he won in his life-time arose neither from an administrative career nor from political influence; it appears that he did not hold any official post. Only a burning admiration for Platonic philosophy made Plethon a famous and widely known teacher. Gemistus spent most of his life far from the capital, in the Peloponnesus in a place called Mystra, which was at that time one of the more lively intellectual centres. There he inculcated a love of Plato's philosophy into the minds of his students.

⁷⁰ Michael Psellos, epist. 252, Migne, PG. 136, 1329—1330.

⁷¹ A monograph by П. В. Безобразов: Византийский писатель и государственный деятель Михаил Псевл, 1899, is devoted to the writings of Psellos. The author in his extensive work puts forward the thesis, questioned today, that the system of Psellos was only a compilation of ancient philosophy (p. 192—194). Ch. Zervos also discusses Psellos in: *Un philosophe néo-platonicien du XIe siècle, Michel Psellos, sa vie, son oeuvre, ses lettres philosophiques, son influence*, Paris 1920, as does В. Вальденберг: Философские взгляды Михаила Псевлла, Византийский сборник, Москва — Ленинград 1945, p. 250 ff.

The works of Psellos were edited in *Bibliotheca graeca medii aevi*, IV Athens-Paris 1874 and V Venice-Paris 1876.

⁷² С. Ф. Успенский: Византийский писатель Никита Акоминат из Хон, Petersburg 1874, p. 47.

Gemistus viewed the prospects of Byzantium sceptically, not believing in the survival of a state whose existence was closely bound up with the Christian religion and Church organization. In principle indifferent to the future of the Empire, he dreamed out his ideas of the state only with the thought of recreating in the Peloponnesus the ancient Hellas. He was convinced that a modified Platonic Utopia might restore the greatness of Greece. We know the political doctrine of Gemistus mainly from his memoranda, addressed to the Byzantine Emperor Manuel II and his son and discussing the reformation of the state in the Peloponnesus. His main work, however, *Nέμοι*, which he wrote towards the end of his life, has only reached us in fragments. After the death of Gemistus the only manuscript of *Laws* was burnt by the order of Patriarch Gennadius as a heretical work⁷³.

Gemistus formed a religious and philosophical system which was at the same time an expression of his political ideas. It was a combination of Zoroastrianism with the ideas of Pythagoras and Plato. The main idea of Gemistus is a conviction that the whole universe is subject to cyclical and orderly changes. The laws of necessity and regularity reigning in the universe are thus a sign of an all-embracing divinity. Gemistus thought the counterpart of the divine order in society to be a division of the people in the state into three groups. The first is composed of peasants and shepherds, the real producers who use the common earth. They, from part of their income, are to pay taxes for the upkeep of the army and state administration. The second group consists of the merchants and the craftsmen, who fulfil a function of service towards the first group. The third group is the team ruling the state, the advisers of the king, entirely devoted to the work of the state. Gemistus, in his ideal state, did not foresee any place for priests and monks; apart from these three groups he only distinguishes the army, the guardian of the entire state. He wanted this imaginary society to live according to the rules of Platonic and Stoic morality and to conduct a self-sufficient economy.

Helpless in the face of the policy of both the Eastern and Western Church, he attempted to revive the Platonic Utopia, seeing in it a source of new strength, and above all he strove for the restoration of the Peloponnesus. Although Gemistus viewed sceptically the possibility of a united action by the Western and Eastern Churches against the Turks, in 1438 and 1439 we find him in Ferrara and Florence, where he was a mem-

⁷³ The political views of Gemistus can be found in *Παλαιολόγεια καὶ Πειλοποννησιακά* ed. Lampros, vol. III, Athens 1926, p. 246—265 and vol. IV, Athens 1930, p. 113—135.

The Fragments of *Nέμοι* were edited by C. Alexandre in *Pléthon, Traité des lois*, Paris 1858, transl. A. Pellisier.

ber of the Byzantine delegation trying unsuccessfully to bring about the re-union of the Churches. Here, however, according to the Italian chroniclers, Gemistus showed no interest in the negotiations, devoting all his time to the propagation of Platonic philosophy⁷⁴. At that time, under his influence, there arose in Italy the idea of recreating in Florence the Platonic Academy, soon to be established by Cosimo de' Medici.

Gemistus infused into Western Europe a spirit of revolt when he awoke an enthusiasm for Platonic philosophy, thus opposing the teaching of Aristotle, which had been officially recognized and adapted to the needs of the Church. Europe did not forget her teacher. In 1475, twenty-five years after his death, the ashes of the philosopher were brought back with great piety from the Peloponnesus to Italy, to be placed in a church crypt at Rimini. The inscription on the grave proclaims: *Gemistus Bizantinus philosophus suo tempore princeps.*

V. MANICHEAN PESSIMISM

The followers of Manichaeism presented a serious threat to the régime in Byzantium. They proclaimed a universal negation of life; they detested everything serving the propagation of life; they detested everything temporal, condemned social institutions, both legal and political, seeing in them an expression of eternal evil. Whereas the Christians saw in their God the Lord and creator of all good things and treated evil as the simple negation of good, which was superior, the Manichees saw in the eternal principle of evil an absolute element, positive, creative, fighting the eternal principle of good. The material world, as they understood it, personified evil, and all contacts with reality, participation in family life or in social and economic life, were considered as a sinful consolidation of evil.

The Manichees pessimistically declared that only by a complete negation of earthly things can man keep away from eternal and indestructible evil.⁷⁵ The doctrine was popular among the poorest people, especially from the time when Christianity became the property of the ruling classes; the religion of the non-possessing classes then became a belief in the indestructibility of evil and the necessity of an absolute negation of earthly affairs. Manichaeism became the doctrine of the poor when they could find no more hope or support in official Christianity.

⁷⁴ C. Oudinus writes about Gemistus and the propagation of his philosophical concepts at Florence in *Commentarius de scriptoribus ecclesiae antiquis*, Part III, Lipsiae 1722, 2358 and J. Corsius: *Vita Marsili Ficini*, IV in: *Philippi Villani Liber de Civitatis Florentiae famosis civibus*, Florence 1847, p. 187 ff.

⁷⁵ We find a discussion of the ideology of the Manichees as found in their writings in P. Alfaric: *Les Écritures Manichéennes*, Paris 1918, 32—53.

For this passive protest against existing reality both emperors and Church fought the Manichees. Justinian adopted the severest legal measures to root out an idea contrary to his concept of the state. "The followers of Manichaeism," we read in the codex of Justinian, "are relentlessly pursued, because they are excluded from human society, being outside the written and customary law..." (*Cod. Just. I, 5, 4*). "...If anybody passes from the godless superstition of the Manichees to the true and real faith... and then in future it is discovered that he has returned to the Manichean heresy or that he has contacts with members of the sect and has not reported them to the authorities... he is subject to the penalty of death... We also decree that the death penalty will be the punishment for anybody who possesses Manichean writings which have not been surrendered to be burnt or destroyed, or has such writings in his possession for any other reason" (*Cod. Just. I, 5, 16*).

Manichaeism was a religious system that lasted a thousand years but its popularity waned between the 4th and the 8th century, especially in the lands within reach of Byzantium.

The Manichean doctrine was formed in the middle of the 3rd century in Persia and was the fruit of the inter-penetration of two worlds; at that time the East came into contact with the Graeco-Roman world and each influenced the other. The Manichean doctrine is thus composed of various elements, like the Syrio-Chaldeic myths, the natural beliefs of the peasants, the ideas of Zoroastrianism about the struggle of good and evil, the Buddhist negation of earthly life, the Judaic conception of prophets and the social ideas of early Christianity.

Secular and Church powers persecuted Manichaeism with passion; its believers were sentenced to death and their writings burned. An account of this doctrine can today be found only in the polemical works of Christian theologians, passionately opposing Manichaeism. One of the oldest documents about the doctrine is *Acta Disputationis Archelai Cascharorum in Mesopotamia episcopi cum Manete haeresiarcha*. In this fourth century document Hegemonius presented the dispute which Mani apparently conducted, together with his disciple Turbo, against Bishop Archelaus. St. Augustine, himself a follower of the doctrine for some time, published many writings against it and fought it with the zeal of a neophyte. In the East in particular the activities of Christian theologians were lively. In the 4th century Eusebius of Cesarea wrote: "At that time also he who indeed was Mani the Mad and who impressed his name on his demoniac heresy he also intended to bring human reason to duplicity. The Devil himself who fights with God has pushed that very man to the foreground for the perdition of many men. In life, he was a barbarian in speech and manners; in his mind he was indeed possessed; and such were

his intentions. He wanted to be a living image of Christ. Once, moved by pride and madness, he said that he was the Paraclete and the Holy Ghost in one person; on another occasion he chose 12 disciples to share in his new teaching, as if he were Christ. He collected his false and godless principles from innumerable heresies, also godless and forgotten a long time ago, and from Persia he poured them out on our countries like some deadly poison. Since then the godless name of the Manichees has spread among the people up to our own day" (*Historia ecclesiastica* VII, 31).

In the East Basil of Cesarea, Gregory of Nyssa and Diodorus of Tarsus also spoke and wrote against the Manichees. During the reign of the Emperor Anastasius I Heraclian of Chalcedon devoted twenty volumes to polemics against the Manichees; under Justinian they were also fought by Bishop Zacharias Retor. Between the years 867 and 871 an unknown poet lists the errors of the Manichees in pompous verse. At that time, however the Manichean ideas were taken over by the Paulicians, who later passed them on to the Bogomils and Cathari, who were also fighting the doctrine of the Church.

Apart from the Graeco-Roman sources we also find information about the doctrine in two Arabic authors of the 10th century, an-Nadim and al-Beruni, who read the original writings of Mani and often refer to the words of the founder of Manichaeism.

The life and work of Mani are veiled in legend. From the Arabic sources we learn that Mávīs was born about 215—216 A.D. in a place called Mārdinū, in Babylonia⁷⁶. His father Fātak apparently came from the Persian town of Hamadan. He wandered through Babylonia to settle at last at Mārdinū, where Main was born. Even before the birth of his son Fātak had joined a sect of *mughtasilah*, which means self-cleansing, in which he is thought to have held an important priestly function. Among the members of that sect a belief prevailed that the Highest Person ruling the universe begot Christ and Satan and in consequence caused a continuous struggle between two elements, good and evil, beauty and ugliness, fire and water. The members of the sect recognised that water is a means of cleansing the elements of evil, therefore they looked on baptism as an entrance to a holy way of life, and from that moment they were committed to asceticism. From his youth Mani apparently lived among the „cleansing ones”. "When he reached the age of twelve,"

⁷⁶ There is another version of the life of Mani, quoted by Hegemonius (from Graeco-Roman sources), according to which the founder of the doctrine was Scythianus ex genere Saracenorum, who lived in the first century; he was initiated into the secret science in Egypt. Scythianus' disciple, Terebinthus, put the doctrine into writing. After the death of Terebinthus a certain Corbicius studied his writings and adopted the name of Mani.

tes an-Nadim, "Mani, according to his own testimony, received a revelation from the Lord of light, brought to him by the angel Eltaum, who said to him, 'Abandon this community! You do not belong to these worshippers. Your task is to regulate manners and put a stop to voluptuousness'"⁷⁷. The legend says that Mani only left the sect of the "cleansing ones" when he was 24, to teach in Asia for forty years. In the reign of Bahrama I Mani returned to Persia, where the priests, afraid of his possible influence on the ruler and hoping to intimidate his followers, had him condemned to death. Mani apparently died a martyr's death in 276. "Mani", says an-Nadim, "died in the reign of Bahrama, the son of Sapor; his body was afterwards crucified, and then cut into two and put on two gates leading to the town"⁷⁸.

Mani was the author of many writings, of which only reminiscences have remained; his works have not survived because even the possession of Manichean writings was punished by death. According to an-Nadim, Mani wrote seven books, one of which was written in Persian and the other six in Syriac; in addition to this he was the author of many short treatises, numbering up to 76 items⁷⁹. He illustrated his writings with beautiful drawings. He was an artist of whom it was said that he could draw circles with his hand as accurate as those drawn by a pair of compasses. According to Arabic tradition Mani executed a whole series of symbolical paintings illustrating his doctrine. He considered himself a prophet equal to Zoroaster, Buddha or Christ; he treated his doctrine as a revelation, contained in four principles — belief in God, in the light of God, in his power and wisdom. The divinity was composed of these qualities, which symbolized the kingdom of light, the elements of earth and the wisdom of the Manichean church.

The fundamental thesis of the Manichees was a belief in the equal and eternal existence of two powers, good and evil, fighting each other⁸⁰.

⁷⁷ *Ibn Abi Ja'kub an-Nadim*, translated by G. Flügel: *Mani, seine Lehre und seine Schriften*. Leipzig 1862, p. 84.

⁷⁸ *Ibn Abi Ja'kub an-Nadim* op. cit. p. 99.

⁷⁹ The books composed by Mani had the following titles: 1) *Mysteries* 2) *The book of giants* 3) *The book of precepts* 4) *The book devoted to king Shapur* 5) *The book of life* 6) *The book of actions* 7) *The Gospels specially illustrated*. About Mani's artistic talent writes Mirchönd, a Persian historian. Ed. K. Kessler: *Mani, Forschungen über die manichäische Religion*, I, Berlin 1889, p. 380.

⁸⁰ In bourgeois literature, ever since the publication of F. Ch. Baur's: *Das manichäische Religionssystem*, Tübingen 1831, there prevails the opinion that the source of Manichean dualism is the dualism as received from Zoroastrianism (p. 89). Baur points out strong affiliations with Zoroastrianism and underlines the fact that Mani took over from that religion both the dualism and the conflict-idea. А. Л. Кац argues against this standpoint of bourgeois literature in *Манихейство в Римской Империи* — по данным Acta Archelai, *Вестник древней истории*, 1955, 3,

The Manichean Faustus, with whom St. Augustine argued, says: „*Duo principia doceo deum et hylem — vim omnem maleficam hyle adsignamus, et beneficam deo ut congruit*” (*Augustinus contra Faustum* XXI, 1). This artist-prophet often spoke to his disciples in symbols and in the language of images, so that it is difficult here to distinguish the contents from the form; the doctrine of the struggle of the two elements is expressed by means of a poetical allegory.

For the Manichees the purest light was the external expression of good; the essence of God was understood as the brightness of light without any material attributes. Darkness was evil, which very strongly permeated matter. In the context of Manichaeism the elements of evil had the same properties as the elements of good. Evil was eternal, indestructible, it possessed the faculty of thinking and willing. In spite of the complete equality of rank of good and evil, only good was called „god” whereas evil was called $\bar{\nu}\lambda\eta$, matter and demon. “Is there one God or two?”; this is a rhetorical question posed by the Manichean Faustus, to which he replies, “never in our doctrines were mentioned the names of two gods. It is true that we believe in two principles (*duo principia*) but we name only one of them god, the other is matter ($\bar{\nu}\lambda\eta$), or, as we usually say, demon” (*Augustinus contra Faustum* XXI).

Everything that exists contains these two contradictory and opposing elements. The Manichees believed that the creation of the universe and its existence is conditioned by the struggle of good and evil. In this doctrine man is a part of the universe, and at the same time, its miniature⁸¹. Man is a microcosm in which the opposing elements of good and evil come to the surface at their highest tension. The Manichees stated that human nature reflects the conflict of the universe, that it is split by contradictions and that in it rages a struggle between good and evil, common sense and stupidity, sobriety and passion, virtue and sin, beauty and ugliness. The human body, the external cover, is the prison of the soul, as all contact with matter is a sinful bond with the elements of evil⁸².

p. 168 ff. He states that one ought to look for the sources of dualism in the objective contradictions which Mani detected in the surrounding world, and he then concludes that there is a universal principle of dualism. Kau quotes Epiphanius, whose statements seem to prove the hypothesis.

⁸¹ *Acta Disputationis S. Archelai*, IX, 4.

⁸² A. A. Bevan (*Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, VIII, Edinburgh 1915, p. 394—402) states on the basis of Arabic sources that the antithesis of good and evil is not, according to Mani, an antithesis of matter and spirit; evil can spread in the sphere of spirit as well as in the sphere of matter. Bevan says that in Manichaeism „the soul is not completely good and the body is not completely bad”. He convincingly tries to prove that the idea attributed to the Manichaeans, that the spirit is good and that matter is bad comes from St. Augustine, who wrongly interpreted Manichaeism.

The thesis that matter in itself is evil led the Manichees to a quite peculiar idea of sin; they considered as sin all contact of light with matter, soul with body. So sin was only the result of a physical state and not the consequence of ethically erroneous behaviour.

This radical negation of concrete reality and condemnation of material conditions prejudiced the social doctrine of the Manichees. They declared that the aim pervading the universe is the cleansing of light from material elements, and man, being a miniature of the universe, should attain the same ideal. They thought that, thanks to the revelation of Mani, man should realise the necessity of renouncing matter to come closer to the light; they looked at their Manichean community as at the only focus of light, surrounded by the material elements of evil and darkness.

Their condemnation of the material side of life led the followers of Mani to an absolute negation of property; they imposed on the faithful a renunciation of all the goods of this world. All that had any material value or made life easier was without any importance for the Manichees. They did not recognize marriage vows or any blood relationship; they were indifferent towards existing social and political institutions tolerating sinful activities. They ordered their believers to live without property, without money, without work, so that they could avoid contact with the material world and would not be soiled by the elements of evil on their way to light. Their social doctrine was symbolized by three seals, mouth, hands and seed (*signaculum oris, manuum, sinus*). These three seals were supposed to guard the Manichees from the external world. "Videamus tria signacula, qua in vestris moribus magna laude ac praedicacione iactatis. Quae sunt tandem ista signacula? Oris certe et manuum et sinus. Quid est hoc? Ut ore... et manibus et sinu castus et innocens sit homo"⁸³.

Mani was supposed to have said that the mouth symbolized all the senses, contained in the head of man, the hands all the activities, and the seed all the sensual passions.

The seal of the lips was to defend the followers of Mani from all that might soil their lips; they were forbidden to eat meat, to lie, to curse, to judge, to condemn or to make speeches.

The range of prohibitions covered by the seal of the hands was very wide. A Manichee could neither wound nor kill a man, could not take part in war, could not carry weapons, could not kill animals, cut flowers or even harm objects of inanimate nature. In consequence, the Manichees could not work, possess any articles as their own property, take part in social life or hold any honours.

⁸³ S. Aurelius Augustinus: *De Moribus Ecclesiae catholicae et de moribus Manicheorum*. 10, Migne, P.L. 32, 1353.

Lastly, the seal of the seed was to prevent the spreading of evil, and a prohibition to bear children or have sexual relationships was to serve that end. The believers of Mani were not to be contaminated by the whirlwind of human passions.

Of course, these prohibitions embraced only a small circle of the most faithful ones — they were the chosen, the perfect, (*ἐκλεκτοί*). A large group of disciples (*κατηχούμενοι*) formed the bulk of the Manichean Community.

Whereas *ἐκλεκτοί* possessed the ability utterly to renounce sexual life, the *κατηχούμενοι* were those who could not obey these precepts; it was sufficient for them to have only the intention to be perfect Manichees. By their work and activities they made possible the existence of the perfect ones. How far the *ἐκλεκτοί* cut themselves off from earthly life is shown in the words of the prayer which they said when eating bread: "Oh bread! I did not cut the wheat, nor mill the flour, nor prepare the dough, nor bake the bread — someone else did it and brought it to me so I am eating you without any guilt"⁸⁴.

The Manichees recruited their followers mainly from the non-property-owning classes. Judging by their myths and cults, it appears that originally Mani had followers among the peasant population. The stories in which the doctrine of Mani was couched are connected with rural life. For instance, the passing of human souls from a lower to a higher state takes place through a wheel-mechanism such as that then in use for the irrigation of fields. Death was personified by a mower cutting the ears of human life. Melons and oil were thought to contain the greatest quantity of light. Their feasts and prayers were connected with the phenomena of nature; they observed their feasts and said their daily prayers according to the position of the sun towards the earth⁸⁵.

Already at the beginning of the 4th century the doctrine of the Manichees had a strong hold on the poor of the towns. When Christianity ceased to be the religion of the poor and oppressed, the social ideas of Manichaeism became a popular doctrine among the non-property-owning classes⁸⁶. From the *Acta disputationis Archelai* we learn about the com-

⁸⁴ *Acta Disputationis S. Archelai*, X, 6.

⁸⁵ A. Кац (op. cit.) underlines the agrarian character of the Manichaean beliefs and places it in the early stages of the doctrine. See K. Kesseler op. cit., p. 243 ff. about the forms of the cult and prayers and their affinities with Babylonian prayers.

⁸⁶ The reasons for the popularity of Manichaeism have been differently interpreted. A. Harnack (*Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte* II, Tübingen 1931, p. 524 ff.) thinks that Manichaeism gained followers by combining mythological elements with materialistic dualism and also because of the simplicity of its worship and rigour of its moral precepts. F. C. Burkitt (*The religion of the Manichees*, Cambridge

plete condemnation of the rich. "Whoever is rich in this world must necessarily, after leaving the body of the rich man, enter the body of a poor man to wander and beg and endure eternal tortures" (X, 3). It is not surprising that, as the *Acta Archelai* show, the dispute of Mani with bishop Archelaus, to which the listening mob of poor people, widows, and orphans, reacted with sympathy, made the bishop very indignant. Whereas the dispute of Archelaus with Mani took place in the provinces in a rural setting, the first official document about Manichaeism talks already about the influence of that „sinister” idea on town dwellers.

Around 290 A. D. the proconsul of Africa informed the emperor of the danger of the spread of Manichaeism in that country. In reply, the emperor in the first years of the 4th century issued a decree, in the introduction of which he talked of the influence of Manichaeism among wicked and thoughtless people; this doctrine, he said, was causing unrest among the peaceful and pious ones, and was a danger to the towns⁸⁷.

Its negation of the social structure and passive protest against all legal and political institutions made Manichaeism a popular doctrine among the poor people, who, helpless and confused, were only capable of a pessimistic condemnation of reality.

The attitude of the Manichees was not without interest for the ruling groups; all means were used to stop the spread of the doctrine, and to dispel this passive protest of the masses. The Byzantine emperors, especially Anastasius I and Justinian, fought Manichaeism with the sword. During the reign of the Vandals in North Africa, and particularly under Gezeric and his son Huneric, vast numbers of them were burnt at the stake. The rulers of Persia were no less cruel towards the followers of Mani. During the reign of Chosroes in the 6th century 80,000 Manichees were condemned to death. Thus the passive opponents were exterminated by fire and sword. The behaviour of the secular power was supported by that of the Christian Church. Whereas at first Christian theologians had simply polemized with the doctrine of Mani, from the second half of the 5th century the Church began to use coercion in its fight against Manichaeism. The African Manichees were the most active; their writings reached Spain, Italy and Gaul. In 431 Pope Leo I ordered a search for Manichean writings in Rome so as to exterminate the demonic

1925, p. 71) attributes the popularity of the doctrine to the personality of the founder and to the pessimism permeating the doctrine. H. Ch. Puech (*Le manichéisme, son fondateur, sa doctrine*, Paris 1949 p. 35) sceptically declares that in present conditions it is impossible to find the sources and understand the popularity of the doctrine.

⁸⁷ *Mosaicarum et Romanarum legum collatio cura F. Blume: Corpus Iuris Romani Anteiusiniani*, Bonn 1841, p. 375 (Tit. XV, 3, 4—7).

idea. The destruction of Manichean literature on a large scale was undertaken by Popes Gelasius I (492—496), Symmachus (498—514), Hormisdus (514—523), and Gregory the Great (590—604). Even Islam was not favourably disposed towards the Manichees. In the 10th century, says an-Nadim, in the Islamic lands there were only a few small groups of the followers of Mani. The last echo of the fight with the Manichees are the articles of the Chinese Codex Ming from the end of the 14th century, condemning the believers of light.

The uncompromising doctrine of complete negation was destroyed by force; an idea which lacked the strength of courage and deed disappeared. For many centuries the elements of the Manichean ideas were to be re-created in various heresies against the Church.

VI. THE REVOLUTIONARY CONTINUATION OF MANICHAEISM

We learn from the *Patrologia Graeca* that a certain Constantine of Samosata, an Armenian, „wished to restore Manichaeism, and with a really diabolical energy proposed that men cease reading anything except the Gospels and the letters of the Apostle... From the Manichean books he took as a point of departure all manner of evil thoughts and managed, with the help of Satan, to explain the wisdom of the Gospels and of the Apostle in a crooked and twisted manner. He destroyed the Manichean books, probably because he knew that many had been killed for possessing them”.⁸⁸

It was in the reign of Constans II (641—668) in Armenia that Constantine of Samosata taught for 27 years the necessity of the simple life and of the need to return to the principles of the early Christians. His contemporaries called the supporters of Constantine Manichees; they referred to themselves as Christians, as opposed to the faithful of the official Church, whom they called Romans. Later they were referred to as Paulicians because, apart from the Gospels, they recognized only the letters of the Apostle Paul as valid for them. This admiration for St. Paul is shown in the fact that they named their communities by the names of the Churches founded by the Apostle.⁸⁹

The movement of the Paulicians gathered strength. Its criticism of the rich ecclesiastical hierarchy, its renunciation of earthly riches, its

⁸⁸ Petros Sikelioites: *Historia utilis et refutatio et que eversio haereseos manichaeorum qui et Pauliciani dicuntur*. Migne. P. G. 104, 1377 B.

⁸⁹ Ф. И. Успенский: История Византийской империи, ч. II, 1. Leningrad 1927, p. 340 ff.) thinks that the Paulicians fought in the name of rationalism against Church ceremonial and the cult of holy images. The author underlines the strong connection of the sect with the teaching of Paul the Apostle.

struggle with the cult of holy images, its rejection of the saints, its idea of the equality of all peoples, its slogans urging the abolition of social distinctions, all appealed to the peasants and to the plebeian population in the cities. This took place in the middle of the seventh century, when the inhabitants of the Empire were suffering from the onslaught of the Arabs. The population was exhausted by continuous war, the slave-economy was breaking down, and the official church was the only point of stability for the helpless state.

Through the religious doctrine of the Paulicians the masses expressed their protest against the existing régime. The social and political doctrine of the Paulicians did not take shape at once. Its formation was influenced by many elements, and as the class-antagonisms increased, its revolutionary spirit developed.

The Paulicians took from the Manichees their negation of the material world, from the early Christian communities their social ideas. As Nestorians they refused to worship Our Lady; like the followers of Islam they did not recognize the cult of saints and holy images. It appears that from the latter they also took their attitude of active opposition to their enemies.

The rulers of the Syrian dynasty, in their struggle against the omnipotent position of the Church and the religious orders, sought support in the movement of the Paulicians. Already the Emperor Leo (717—741) had, in the last years of his reign, concluded an understanding with the leaders of the sect. His successor, Constantine V, in order to strengthen the camp of the iconoclasts, transferred the Paulicians to Constantinople and Thrace.

At the turn of the 8th century the Paulician movement covered the whole Empire. At that time the leader of the masses was a certain craftsman, a linen weaver, called Serge, who adopted the name of Tychikos. He led the Paulicians for 34 years, and under his leadership was formed a large revolutionary movement that fought with arms for a change in the social system. In the church chronicle of Peter Siculus we read: „That defender of Satan, Serge, learned the heresy from a fatal woman and then, taking the name of Tychikos, he passed fearlessly through all cities and towns; he turned many away from the universal faith and drew them to Satan”⁹⁰.

During the struggle of the Syrian emperors with the defenders of the cult of images, the Paulicians represented the extreme plebeian current. Their religious programme suited the iconoclasts. But the social demands of the Paulicians foreshadowed the sharp social conflicts

⁹⁰ Migne, P. G. 104, 1288.

which were to break out in the near future. Their doctrine was fully formed by the first half of the 9th century ⁹¹. The Paulicians proclaimed that the creator of the material world is Satan, they denied the cult of Our Lady, of the saints, of the Prophets and angels; in consequence they opposed all ceremonies and fasts, the cult of holy images and symbols, and rejected hierarchical Church organisation and all the decisions of the universal and provincial councils. After the death of Serge-Tychikos (830) they introduced in their communities the principle of common property, of equality between men and women, an iron discipline of all the faithful bound only by social and religious ideas and irrespective of race relations; they demanded a ruthless struggle against all enemies.

Because of their radical doctrine and uncompromising loyalty to their ideas, the Paulicians often found themselves in conflict with the ruling classes. In the middle of the 9th century the iconoclasts made a compromise with the Church. Thus there disappeared the means of co-operation, through religion, between the ruling classes and the Paulicians, who actively supported the agrarian revolution of Thomas. A period of heavy fighting and of Paulician persecution began. „The Empress Theodora”, according to Theophanes Continuatus, „decided either to convert the Paulicians to the true faith or to exterminate them without leaving anybody alive... Up to about 100,000 of them perished, and their possessions were taken and transferred to the imperial treasury” ⁹². The Emperor Basil I (867—886) organized two big expeditions against the Paulicians, destroying them by fire and sword. Those who survived left their ruined strongholds and went to either Thrace or Arabia.

When in the thirties of the 9th century the period of persecution began, the Paulicians in Cappadocia founded three big military camps, the biggest of which was Tephrika ⁹³. They must have presented a considerable force, because their commander, Chrysocheir, demanded from Basil I that all Asia Minor should surrender to them.

The proverbial honesty, courage and generosity of the heretics and their fearless bravery could not stand up to the power of the mighty, who, thanks to the friendly indifference of the caliph, overran the camps of the revolutionaries. The ideas of the Paulicians persisted for

⁹¹ Е. Э. Липшиц: Павликянское движение в Византии в VIII и первой половине IX вв., Византийский временник, V, 1952 p. 66 ff.) presents the process of the formation of the doctrine in the first decades of the IXth century.

⁹² Theophanes Continuatus, IV, 16 (Bonn. p. 165).

⁹³ This fact is stressed by Ch. Diehl (Cambridge Medieval History vol. IV, The Eastern Roman Empire, Cambridge 1923, p. 42).

a long time among the Byzantine people, and we find their ideals in Bulgaria in the anti-feudal movement of the Bogomils. The doctrine of the latter was not, however, a simple continuation of the ideology of the Paulicians, as it was formed in different times and circumstances.

In the middle of the 10th century Bulgaria, exhausted by the wars with Byzantium, went through an internal crisis; the military-aristocratic régime gave way to a feudalism which was ever increasing in strength as the peasants were gradually deprived of their lands.

The heresy of the Bogomils embodied the anti-feudal protest of the peasants and lower clergy against the pride of the upper classes.

The undoubtedly affiliations of this doctrine with Manichaeism and with the ideology of the Paulicians and Messalians cannot hide the specifically Bulgarian character of a heresy which enabled the Bulgarian peasants to declare war against the feudal system in the name of religious reforms. The followers of this doctrine did not restrict themselves to an attack on the social system; on the contrary, believing in the victory of good, they proclaimed positive social ideals which they wished to realize in their communities.

The first information about the Bogomils comes from a treatise of Cosmas against the heretics⁹⁴. Who Cosmas was is hardly known. We know that he was a Bulgarian and higher clergyman and that at the turning point of the 10th century he published his treatise against the Bogomils. Through it we learn of the moral corruption of the official clergy, whom Cosmas accuses of lack of piety, ignorance, decay and bribery. The treatise of Cosmas is directed first of all against the heretics for their opposition to the Church, but at the same time it shows the danger inherent in their social ideas: „The Bogomils”, says Cosmas, „call their believers not to submit to the authorities, but to hate the rich, to hate the emperors, to jeer at superiors, to insult the rulers. They believe that God dislikes those who work for the emperor and advise all servants not to work for their masters”⁹⁵. Such ideas must have awoken warm sympathy among the persecuted, together with a sharp reaction among the ruling classes. The doctrine of the Bogo-

⁹⁴ H. Ch. Puech. A. Vaillant: *Le traité contre les Bogomiles de Cosmas le Prêtre*, Paris 1945. Travaux publiées par l’Institut d’études slaves 21. In discussing the treatise the authors remark: „The heresy of the Bogomils has a deeply peasant character. It would be a mistake to connect this so rigorously Christian doctrine with the paganism still latent in Bulgaria; it is a simplified Christianity”. (p. 32) It seems that this theory is open to discussion, because the struggle of the Bogomils against ecclesiastical hierarchy was rooted in the pagan tradition of the Bulgarians, as the Bulgarian historians point out.

⁹⁵ М. Т. Попруженко: Козма Пресвитер, болгарский писатель X века. „Болгарские старини”, 12, 35. Sofia 1936, s. 11—14.

mils was born of the protest of the masses against inequalities of wealth tolerated by the official Church.

We do not know anything about Bogomil, the founder of the sect. Cosmas only says that Bogomil, whose name meant „a man worthy of divine mercy”, was a poor clergyman living in the reign of the Emperor Peter (927—969). 'Bogomilism' must have originally gained believers also among the lower clergy who often took the side of the poor in their fight against the rich. It seems that such a doctrine, protesting against the abuses of the government, urging a return to evangelical simplicity, condemning the riches of this world, and particularly profigate luxury, suited the lower clergy. Cosmas distinguishes two groups among the clergy, one the educated and independent, the other, the ignorant, poor, country clergy, unfriendly towards the rich priests. He sees an obvious relation between education and wealth. „The rich”, he says, „have concentrated the books in their hands, do not let them out to the poor, and so hide truth and make education a privilege unattainable by the poor”⁹⁶.

As the doctrine of the Bogomils spread, the number of writings directed against it increased. The Church fought it through her representatives at the councils, excommunicating them wholesale and condemning their judgments. In his stubborn fight with the heretics the Tsar was helped by the property-owning classes, who discerned in the doctrine a clear danger to the social system of the Middle Ages⁹⁷. The official hierarchy of the Greek Church had many reasons for fighting the Bogomils, who persistently taught that the privileged position of the higher clergy cannot be reconciled with the duties of the servants of God. Rejecting the ritual of the Greek Church, they did not recognize the hierarchical organization of the clergy, declaring that it did not follow the precepts of early Christianity or the examples of the Apostolic Communities. The Bogomil criticism of the higher clergy appealed to the majority of the Bulgarians, who only reluctantly submitted to the authority of the ecclesiastical class. Similarly, there was a lively response among the people to the Bogomil teaching condemning the private property and landed estates carefully accumulated by the higher clergy. Their principle was contained in the words of Christ to the young man who tried to become His disciple. „If thou hast

■■■ М. Т. Попруженко: op. cit., p. 72.

■■■ A comprehensive monograph about the Bogomils was written in Bulgarian and from a Marxist point of view by Д. Ангелов: Богохулството в Болгария. It was translated in 1954 into Russian. Ангелов analyses the doctrine as a mass-movement, national and heretical, and undergoing changes caused by transformations in the social, economic and political life of Bulgaria in the Middle Ages.

a mind to be perfect, go home and sell all that belongs to thee; give it to the poor, and so the treasure thou hast shall be in heaven: then come back and follow me" (St. Matthew XIV. 21). The Bogomils were deeply convinced that the poorer one is the easier it is to practise virtue. In their view wealth was incompatible with any moral system, and therefore they considered poverty the greatest benefaction and an indispensable condition of perfection. As with the Manichees, the doctrine allowed only the ordinary members to possess and dispose of estates; the perfect ones had to renounce all property for the benefit of a common fund which was the financial basis of the Bogomil communities. Whoever wanted to become perfect had to take a vow of renunciation of all property for the benefit of the community. In the Bogomil communities women enjoyed equality with men. Work was the duty of all members; nobody could avoid it. Similarly, the heretics condemned begging and the distribution of alms as undignified to both God and men.

Bogomil communal life involved the sharing of all goods, a system modelled on the early Christian communities, which in turn imitated the way of life of the Essenes, a sect preceding and influencing early Christian doctrine. The communism of the Bogomils sanctioned the missionary work of the perfect ones and simultaneously assured an existence to those who had no wealth or who because of illness had to stop working. The Evangelical precept of mutual aid had become a fundamental moral duty for the Bogomil communes.

Whereas in their religious and social doctrine the Bogomils through centuries were incredibly consistent, on the other hand, their idea of the state kept changing, depending on their relation with actual governments. They had no fixed theory of state or power. They wanted to remove injustice by preaching the need for moral perfection, by spreading the teaching of mutual help, and by the renunciation of earthly goods. They thought that a good ruler by his virtues could put an end to all evil. This varying attitude towards the government showed itself in their estimate of the Tsar Peter, whose reign they originally condemned passionately in their sermons. They did not miss any opportunity of accusing all who collaborated with the Tsar or helped to consolidate his power. But when in 1014 Bulgaria lost her independence, the Bogomils rebelled against the Byzantine yoke, and their opinion of Tsar Peter changed; he became for them symbol of a happy and just reign. In their chronicles we read: „...and he (Tsar Peter) reigned on Bulgarian soil twelve years without any sin, not knowing a wife, and blessed was his rule. In those years and days of the reign of the Holy Tsar Peter the Bulgarians had an abundance of wheat, butter, honey,

milk and wine; innumerable were the gifts of God and in nothing did they suffer poverty⁹⁸.

Previously condemned, Tsar Peter now, during the struggle of the Bogomils with the Byzantine rule, won an aura of sanctity, and his reign was as a dream come true.

The religious and social doctrine of the Bogomils expressed the views of the oppressed masses, who in the atmosphere of the Middle Ages could only use heretical ideas in order to fight with those main supporters of feudalism, the Church and the state.

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The history of the political thought of Byzantium as outlined here presents only a fragmentary picture of the doctrines of the Eastern Empire. Expressed as they are in religious creeds, in dogmatic quarrels and heresies, they are difficult to decipher. Hence their unjustified neglect in the traditional history of doctrines, although Byzantine political thought was not without influence on the shape of medieval Europe. Under its influence the universalist concept of the Western Empire was formed, as well as the social movements of the heretics, who in their beliefs touched on the ideals of Manichaeism.

S T R E S Z C Z E N I E

Doktryny polityczne Bizancjum wyrosły ze splotu sprzeczności gospodarczo-społecznych. Na ich treść składały się idee ustrojowe, filozoficzne i religijne Wschodu i Zachodu, krzyżujące się na tym pograniczu Azji i Europy.

Oficjalnej doktrynie o silnym zabarwieniu teokratycznym przeciwstawała się opozycja ludowa. Obok tych dwóch zasadniczych nurtów krzewiły się w społeczeństwie bizantyjskim poglądy sceptycyzmu i pesymizmu, snute bądź na kanwie filozofii greckiej, bądź też wyrażone w formie doktryn religijnych.

W okresie rządów Justyniana (527—565) oficjalna doktryna cesarstwa otrzymała najbardziej wyraźne kontury. Złożyły się na nią trójakie elementy: religia chrześcijańska, idee prawa rzymskiego oraz wiara w boskość władcy. Do tej doktryny dwieście lat później nawiązywała dynastia syryjska, a zwłaszcza cesarz Leon III (717—741), z tym że ustawodawstwo jego zawierało bardzo wyraźne tendencje postępowe w stosunku do norm justyniańskich.

⁹⁸ Болгарски апокрифен летопис published in the work by И. Иванов: Богомилски книги и легенди. Sofia 1925, p. 284.

W VI i VII wieku główny ośrodek opozycji stanowiły wielkie miasta a zwłaszcza stolica. Zorganizowana według dzielnic ludność dzieliła się ponadto na dwa antagonistyczne stronnictwa, zależnie od swoich sympatii do zawodników, walczących na arenach cyrkowych. Pomimo konfliktów, podtrzymywanych przez klasy rządzące w chwilach walki z wyzyskiem możnych, władz i cudzoziemców jednociął się cały lud.

Od VIII wieku rozpoczynają się w Bizancjum ruchy agrarne, skierowane przeciw wielkim właścicielom, usiłującym podporządkować sobie wolnych chłopów. Szczególnie szeroki zasięg miało powstanie Tomasza (r. 821), który przez 2 lata przewodził chłopom macedońskim i trackim. W pierwszej połowie X wieku powstają chłopi ponownie — pasmo rewolucji rozpoczyna się zwłaszcza po wielkiej klęsce nieurodzaju w r. 928. Pomimo represji ze strony arystokracji stale powtarzają się powstania ludowe. Bardzo głęboką rewolucję przezywa Bizancjum również w połowie XIV wieku. Był to masowy ruch zilotów, skupiający chłopów i plebs miejski. Największe nasilenie ruchu powstańczego, który ogarnął niemal całe imperium, miało miejsce w Tessalonikach (1342—1349), gdzie przez siedem lat rządzili powstańcy. Dokonano tam konfiskaty majątków kościelnych i prywatnych oraz wprowadzono zupełnie nowe instytucje polityczne, aby zapewnić władzę ludowi.

Obok owych agrarno-plebejskich ruchów, nastroje krytyczne i opozycyjne wobec panujących stosunków ujawniały się w kołach inteligencji kształconej na literaturze i filozofii antycznej. Natomiast do nieuczonych ludzi, ogarniętych niechęcią do ustroju i niewiarą w jego naprawę — przemawiała mistyka chrześcijańska. Stąd też wśród ludności wschodniego cesarstwa szerzyły się tendencje do życia pustelniczego i zakonnego, co znalazło uzewnętrznienie w szeroko rozbudowanej organizacji klasztorów.

Negatywną bierność wobec ustroju przejawiali również wyznawcy manicheizmu. Głosili oni potępienie wszystkiego co ziemskie, dlatego nie uznawali panującego porządku i instytucji politycznych, widząc w nich elementy zła. Mimo prześladowań wielka była ich popularność na terenach Cesarstwa Bizantyjskiego od IV do VIII wieku. Do ich doktryny nawiązują w VIII i IX wieku paulicjanie, którzy żądają równości majątkowej, domagając się równocześnie od Kościoła wyrzeczenia się bogactw. Od manichejczyków przejęli paulicjanie negację świata materialnego, od wspólnot wczesnochrześcijańskich — hasła społecznej równości, od islamu — potępienie kultu obrazów i świętych oraz czynną postawę wobec swych wrogów.

W połowie X wieku chłopi bułgarscy, walczący z feudałami wyrażają swe przekonania w formie herezji bogumińskiej, która ukształtowała się pod wpływem idei manichejczyków i paulicjan.

РЕЗЮМЕ

Политические доктрины Византии были порождены общественно-экономическими противоречиями. В их основе лежат идеи государственного устройства, философии и религиозные идеи Востока и Запада, перекрецивающиеся на этой границе Азии и Европы.

Официальной доктрине с ярко выраженным теократическим влиянием противопоставлялась народная оппозиция. Наравне с этими двумя основными теориями в византийском обществе находили также распространение идеи скептицизма и пессимизма, основывающиеся на греческой философии, или же выражавшиеся в форме религиозных доктрин.

В период правления Юстиниана (527—565) официальная доктрина империи приобрела наиболее определенную форму. Она состояла из трех элементов: христианской религии, идеи римского права и веры в божественность правителя. На эту доктрину двести лет спустя ссыпалась сирийская династия, а особенно император Леон III (717—741), однако его законодательство выражало более прогрессивные тенденции по сравнению с юстинианским.

В VI и VII веках главный центр оппозиции сосредотачивался в крупных городах, а главным образом в столице. Население организованное по районам города, делилось кроме того на две антагонистические группы в зависимости от того, кому из выступающих на цирковой арене борцов они симпатизировали. Однако, несмотря на конфликты, поддерживаемые правящими классами, весь народ сплачивался в борьбе против эксплуатации имущих, властей и иностранцев.

С VIII века начинаются в Византии аграрные движения, направленные против крупных собственников, стремившихся подчинить себе свободных крестьян.

Особенно широкий размах имело восстание, продолжавшееся два года, под предводительством Фомы (821 год), в котором участвовали македонские и фракийские крестьяне. В первой половине X века крестьяне снова восстают, особенно сильные волнения наблюдаются после стихийного бедствия — неурожая 928 года. Несмотря на репрессии аристократии народные восстания беспрерывно повторяются. Сильный революционный подъём переживала Византия также в половине XIV века. Это было массовое движение зилотов, объединяющее крестьян и городских плебеев. Народные восстания охватывали всю империю. Одно из наиболее продолжительных восстаний происходило в Тессалониках (1342—1349), где в течение семи лет у власти находились восставшие. Там была произведена конфискация церковных и частных владений, а также образованы совершенно новые по-

литические учреждения, имеющие целью обеспечить власть народу.

Наряду с крестьянско-плебейскими выступлениями, в кругах интеллигенции, воспитывающейся на античной литературе и философии, тоже наблюдались критические и оппозиционные настроения.

В то же самое время простой народ отрицательно относящийся к существующему строю и не верящий в его улучшение, легко подвергался влиянию христианской мистики. Поэтому среди населения восточной империи было широко распространено стремление к отшельнической монашеской жизни, что нашло свое выражение в широко развитой организации монастырей.

Отрицательное отношение к существующему строю проявляли также приверженцы манихеизма. Они провозглашали осуждение всего что земное, поэтому не признавали существующих порядков и политических учреждений, видя в них элементы зла. Несмотря на преследования, они были очень популярны в Византийской империи в период с IV до VIII веков. На их доктрины в VIII и IX веках ссылались приверженцы святого Павла, требовавшие имущественного равенства и одновременно отказа костёлов от своих богатств.

От манихеизма приверженцы св. Павла переняли негативное отношение к материальному миру, от раннего христианства — лозунги общественного равенства, от ислама осуждение культа икон и святых, а также пример активной борьбы со всеми врагами.

В половине X века болгарские крестьяне, борющиеся с феодализмом, выражали свои убеждения в форме „богумильской ереси”, которая сформировалась под влиянием идей манихеизма, а также приверженцев святого Павла.